A practical, lively handbook for members or chairmen

NEW WAYS TO BETTER MEETINGS

TESTED METHODS SHOWING:

- How to use the new findings on group behavior.
- How to make your meetings, committees, or conferences produce more effectively.
- How to enlist every member's interest and cooperation.

Bert and Frances Strauss

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NEW WAYS

TO BETTER MEETINGS

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NEW WAYS *to Better Meetings*

BY

BERT AND FRANCES STRAUSS

DRAWINGS BY THOMAS E. HUTCHENS

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For DORIS and HIRAM

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SY6

NEW WAYS

TO BETTER MEETINGS

I

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

THIS BOOK is for anyone who has to lead meetings, large or small, and has an uneasy feeling that they aren't what they might be. It is also for those less happily situated, who have to go to those meetings and would be the first to admit that most of them are a bore, an irritation, or sheer waste of time.

In the last few years new ideas have come marching across the mental horizon which, rightly applied, can change the picture for both leaders and the so-called led. They are the results of experiments and tests which social scientists have been making in a particular field of human relations: how people affect one another when they come together in a group. Each person present, they figure, is trying to influence that group in some way; he is therefore a force in it. What these forces do to one another, and how, and why, are the subjects of continuing research.

We all pay lip-service to the notion, as old as that of democracy, that a group, as a group, can solve its problems better than an individual. The social scientists have made it possible to turn that lip-service into action. They offer practical ways to pull together the forces within a group and to help it use all the ability and experience its members possess.

For members, these new methods have an effect roughly comparable to a shot of adrenalin. They feel a kind of personal possession, responsibility, and eagerness about the

Captive . . . without a chance of talking back

group's problems which they had not known before. Having really shared in making decisions, they want to share in carrying them out. The helpless sense of being captive to boredom and tedium, of being talked at without a chance of talking back, can be lessened, if not eliminated, even in a large meeting or conference.

For a leader, the use of these new methods offers a great relief. The success or failure of the committee does not lie on his shoulders alone. The burden is divided. His job is no longer the tense one of pushing and cajoling, with part of his mind always concerned for his reputation as a chairman.

For the group's purpose, working along these lines produces a marked change in results, both during and after the sessions. Most traditional meetings turn into a debate among the articulate few. Their ideas and personalities stick up—to use the old simile—like the peak of an iceberg. But this new

kind of meeting allows the submerged intelligence and skill of the other members to come to the surface.

Night after night, all over the country, the cars stream out —to PTA meetings, to Emergency School meetings, to church and civic meetings. They go to management societies, to club groups, to boards of Community Chest, Camp Fire Girls, Scouts—to an endless and varied number of meetings. During the day there are staff conferences or training programs or supervisors holding meetings for their staffs. Management meets with labor; foremen meet in conference with workers. All up and down the line people go to meetings in a wholehearted, if not very effective, effort to share problems.

There is, in fact, an enormous amount of good will and desire to help. But we have not begun to draw on it, for we have never before had a working method by which all the ability represented in a group could express itself. Not having had workable techniques to bolster our good will, we have bungled in our efforts to use it. We have had votes by the majority, with a lively and rebellious minority tagging along. We have had plans and decisions "explained" by those at the top rather than any shared progress toward those plans and decisions.

Back in 1876 an "eminent engineer" took stock in his orderly mind of all the facts he had read and noted and studied for years about parliamentary procedure. It occurred to him that he could make a good thing of that interest by writing a book to systematize that procedure. His name was Henry Martyn Robert and he called his book *Rules of Order*. He made a very good thing of it indeed. In no time it had sold over a million copies.

And ever since we have been hedged in and controlled by the rules Mr. Robert compiled. There is no doubt that they

are convenient, orderly, and in many cases necessary. There is also little doubt that they have functioned for years to stymie meetings. The Robert's *Rules* have made it possible for a few to take control and impose their convictions on those others not quite so ready to spring to their feet, not quite so able to phrase emphatically what they want to say. The *Rules* have forced the role of boss—or dictator—on the chairman. They have set such a rigid pattern for the usual meeting that although the members go, from duty or necessity, many of them won't bother to take an active part in it.

In recent years we have begun to realize that participation, and only participation, will release the untapped supply of energy and ideas. Industries have discovered that it results in greater production, cuts down on absenteeism, and provides a real incentive to better the product, whatever it may be. In any organization or group, the situation is comparable. When the members are allowed to build with those at the top, the whole enterprise picks up new energy. It makes little difference whether these members are paid for their services or are volunteering them; whether one talks in terms of man-hours lost or mind-hours. The salvaging of time and energy is the same.

But it was not until the social scientists turned their attention to groups that we began to struggle out from under the dead hand of habit and Mr. Robert's rules.

In the late thirties Ronald Lippitt, a graduate student at the University of Iowa, spotted the word "groups" in a list of possible subjects for a Ph.D. thesis. He tracked down the professor responsible for the suggested subject, the brilliant Viennese social psychologist Kurt Lewin, and one of the most fruitful collaborations in the whole field of the social sciences began.

The work which they did in that pupil-teacher relationship was of the kind that suddenly opens a door to a new area of research. It was not that the door labeled "groups" had been closed before. Plenty of research had gone on, but it had been along other lines. Lewin and Lippitt found new ways to spotlight human beings in groups.[1] The starting experiments were to determine what different kinds of leaders did to the groups working under them.

In one of these experiments four boys' clubs were organized to work on similar projects but under different kinds of leaders: the boss or policeman type; the laissez-faire or good-fellow, non-interfering type; and the democratic type. The two social scientists devised methods to analyze what went on in the meetings and used all possible statistical and scientific checks to make sure there would be no loopholes in the findings.

The boys were eleven years old, as nearly alike as could be found in background, interests, intelligence, skill, and so on. The groups met in the same place at different times. Not only did they work under different types of leaders, but from time to time leaders were interchanged. On certain occasions the leaders failed to appear or were late. When this happened, a janitor or some other outsider walked in, surveyed what the boys were making, pointed out mistakes, and made himself as obnoxious as he could.

When an outsider walked in on the group with the policeman type of leader, he so upset its members that they turned on one of the boys and made a scapegoat of him. These boys,

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[1] Ronald Lippitt and Ralph K. White, "An Experimental Study of Leadership and Group Life," summarized in *Readings in Social Psychology*, edited by Newcomb and Hartley (New York: Henry Holt, 1947), pp. 315–30.

in the absence of their leader, were baffled, unable to continue with their work, and went generally to pieces as a group.

Those who operated under the lenient hand of the good-fellow leader showed the greatest development in knowledge, having had to work things out for themselves. But they were well behind the others in accomplishment. They also spent a good deal of their time making life miserable for a few victims, particularly when the outsider came in to annoy them.

When the democratic leader walked out on his group, the boys went right on working. They did not pick on one another. When the critical stranger came in they got angry, thoroughly angry. But instead of taking out their anger on one of the group, they turned on the stranger or, in one instance, took their hammers and chisels and smashed some plywood stacked nearby for their use. In fact, they acted with considerable maturity for eleven-year-olds.

These experiments (not nearly so simple as they sound in this quick telling) gave additional push to research which has since gathered in its wake a steadily increasing number of educators, sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists. It was a dynamic approach to the conception that human beings can be studied as elements. What makes a group click? What makes it disintegrate? What do people do to one another when they get into a group? Why do we often surprise ourselves in a group? What kind of chain reaction does this getting together set up? Is a group a thing in itself, different from the individuals who make it up? Is one group remarkably like any other?

The answers are still coming. The researchers are still producing more useful facts from such fields as group dy-

What makes a group click?

namics, sociometry, cultural anthropology, and socio-drama. But they have found that under similar conditions groups *do* act remarkably like one another. The things that are wrong with them are pretty much the same too—and so are the cures.

Some of the material in this book stems directly from that research. Other parts of it come from experience obtained by making practical application of the research results. A third major source has been devices developed and successfully used in training groups or in helping groups to improve themselves.

II

WHAT'S WRONG WITH OUR MEETINGS?

ONCE we had a committee.

"Will you come next Tuesday night," we asked, "to talk about the school situation?"

Yes, they would come. They would all come. We called the local funeral parlor to rent chairs; we pushed back the furniture in the living room to make space. Still more people, hearing about the meeting came.

There were the usual officers: chairman, secretary, treasurer.

"Would a dollar-fifty dues per year be too much?"

"It's not enough. There's too much to be done. Make it more."

For three Tuesday evenings we met with energy and eagerness. At the fourth we agreed we must have a constitution and by-laws. A subcommittee was appointed to prepare them. The next meeting was devoted to going over their work, paragraph by paragraph. Then, as Mr. X kept breaking in with, "You can't do that—it won't be legal," we began going over those pages almost word by word.

Fewer and fewer people came. Finally there was the Tuesday when we decided we no longer needed to rent extra chairs. Then even our own remained unfilled.

"What's the matter? What happened?" we kept asking.

Then there is what might be called the Railroaded Committee.

Once a month this committee meets to work out a training program which is to be handed on to volunteer leaders. The members are intelligent, hard-working, and by all odds better and more efficient than the average meeting-goer. They get down to work promptly; they end promptly. During the meeting they give most of their attention to the job at hand. The chairman is charming, tactful, and competent.

But there was the occasion, early in the year's meetings, when the committee got stuck on the real nature of their job: were they themselves to do the training, or were they to supply it from more skilled sources? The argument went back and forth, with considerable feeling on both sides.

Suddenly there was a pause and the chairman broke in, "Then we're agreed that we will do the actual training?"

The members were *not* agreed, but the old habit of deference to authority held. They argued no more. Once in the hall outside, however, the resentment of the unconvinced burst forth.

Then there are the committees that might be labeled Lambs-to-Slaughter.

These are the groups made up of people who don't know what they're coming together for. They sit, waiting to be told. In communities, in business, in industry, in trade and professional associations, in so-called "training" situations, busy people will sit politely for two or three hours, listening to a series of speeches. These may be good or bad—but the members, or audience, are powerless to do anything about it, one way or another.

The weekly staff meeting falls into this category. Each member doodles on the pad of paper which lies at his place.

He waits to get a cue from the boss as to how much he dares to say and what. Should the boss be the kind who encourages free talk from his subordinates, that helps. But usually the staff is there to be told, at endless length. For a time they listen. Then they begin to glance at their watches: will their lunch dates wait half an hour, forty-five minutes? Will he *never* get through talking?

Many different types of "sick" groups could be described, but everyone can furnish examples from his own experience. More to the point is to ask why they are sick. What's wrong with almost every meeting all of us go to? What happens? Why do most meetings fall completely short of what they might accomplish, both during and after the meeting? The reason is almost always the same, although it comes about in different ways: the members have lost the desire to participate. It has been killed, one way or another.

In the Lambs-to-Slaughter kind of group, it rarely has a chance even to come to birth. In our school committee we killed it ourselves, without realizing what we were doing, by grinding out a constitution and by-laws. We killed it with boredom. In the Railroaded group it was done by suppression. Whenever a few members gather resentfully in the hall after a small meeting, they have just left a "sick" group. No one likes to have his convictions ignored and overruled. If what he says isn't going to be treated for what it's worth, why should he bother to say it? For that matter, why should he bother to go to the meeting?

Neither the chairman nor the office boss is to be blamed for this lack of participation. Nor are the members. Until new methods are used to change old attitudes and divide responsibility among participants, meetings will stay sick.

Every group is different

"But My Group Is Different!"

Quite right. Every group is different. Even the same group becomes different when a new member replaces an old one. A group acts one way at tonight's meeting and completely differently at next week's, when it's working on another problem and the members are feeling different.

Whether the group produces much or little depends on the type of behavior members fall into, often unintentionally. One man who is always on the ball may take over five meetings in a row, dominating and running them as only he can. At the sixth meeting he fails to appear. Everything seems changed. "Best meeting we ever had," someone comments when it's over; "the whole meeting felt different." But the truth is that this member enjoyed the meeting so much because he at last got his innings; he did the dominating.

The group changes because the behavior patterns in it change. Everyone is aware of the subtle shifting of attitude in a group when a new member turns up. But it's a change of emphasis or of degree. The same patterns of behavior are still there at every meeting and in every group, including

those that hinder it, by interrupting or distracting, and sometimes bringing it to a complete halt.

One of the first steps toward making a meeting productive is to recognize the following roles. All of us have been guilty of assuming one or more of them in meetings. There are many, but here are the most familiar ones, divided into Nuisance and Destructive types. And though we describe each of these as though describing a member, that is only to make them more easily recognizable. What follows should be read in terms of activities any member is likely to exhibit at one time or another.

Nuisance Types

PIGEONHOLER

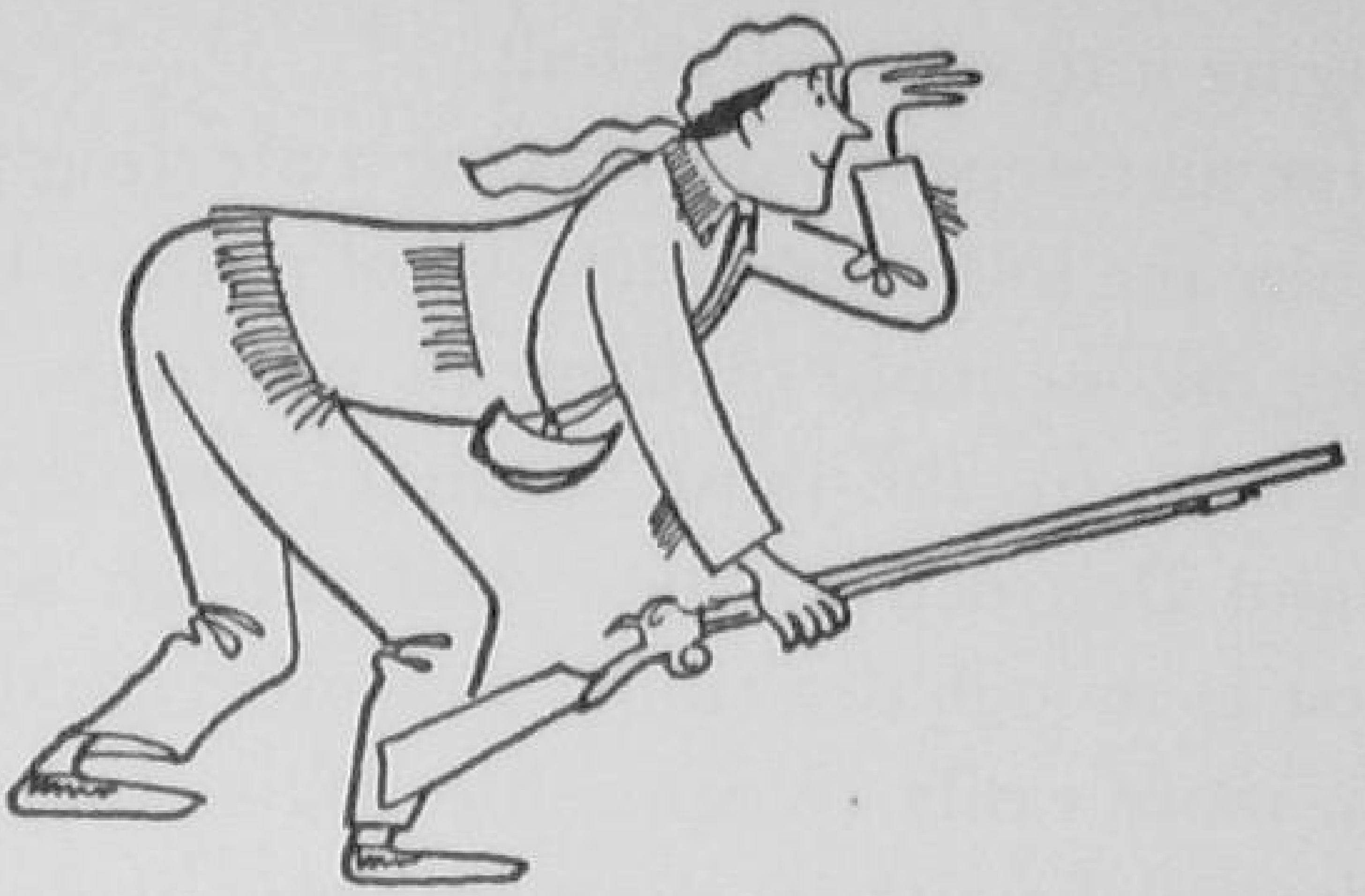
Also might be called the get-it-in-the-notebook member. All through the meeting he's busy indenting 1 under A. He carries small notebooks with him for this purpose. He hardly hears what's going on because his mind is on these notes. What he will ever make of them is a secret—from him too.

HAIR-SPLITTER

Too orderly-minded type. Can't function unless he has definitions. Everything has to be named, labeled, and packaged. First cousin to the Pigeonholer.

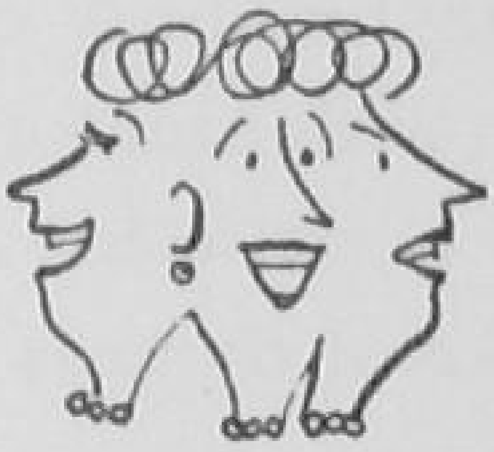
EAGER BEAVER

Wide-eyed enthusiast. "This just occurred to me . . . I haven't thought it out yet, but . . ."



EXPLORER

Kin to Eager Beaver. Every new plan or idea excites this member, whether or not he's known anything about it before, or knows anything about it now.



TALKER

Member of a large family, some of whom have graduated from the Nuisance into the Destructive class. Our favorite is the modest one who always manages to explain how "I just happen to have made a special study of that, and I think I can help you out . . ." And he does, forever and ever.

FENCE-SITTER

Or band-wagon jumper. This member never commits himself until all the returns are in. Then he becomes conspicuously in favor of the winning verdict. In an office, he waits for a cue from the boss.

SUPERIOR BEING

Looks down his nose at the whole affair. Studies fingernails throughout meeting. Noncommittal, non-participating. Doesn't want to be bothered. He came because his good friend Blank just insisted . . .

DOUBTING THOMAS

The head-shaker, the "I-don't-think-it-can-possibly-work" type. Akin to "I-don't-think-they'll-like-it" type.

WISE-CRACKER

Fancies himself as the group clown, that needed "light touch." Brags, tells stories, always thinks of "a good one you ought to hear—fits right in to what we're talking about."

DEPRECIATOR

"Of course I know you are all smarter than I am and have more experience. So what I have to say probably isn't very important and won't interest you, but . . ."

Destructive Types

(We admit that the line between Nuisance and downright Destructive types is hard to draw. Scratch one and you're likely to find the other.)

DOMINATOR

Ten minutes of a meeting are enough to get him to take off his velvet glove. Monopolizes discussion, gives orders, dictates. Tries to be patient with the slow reactions of the others—but not for long. The boss type.

Or there is the other kind of dominator, who thinks faster, has more facts, is honestly way out ahead of the others.

MANIPULATOR

Flatters other members by open, special praise during the meeting, or seeks members out afterwards: "Say, I thought you had a very special point there. They should have been paying more attention to you . . ." Starts little cliques or sub-groups.

BELITTLER

Always criticizes or ignores other members. Gives an acid edge even to the best-intended remark.

ALWAYS VULNERABLE

Interprets every disagreement as a personal attack. Wastes group's time defending himself and explaining. Much later

will come back to it by saying, "That's exactly what I meant when I said . . ."

BLOCKER

The mule. Goes farther than the Doubting Thomas. He not only doubts; he balks. It takes a major fire to get him to move. He doesn't give reasons. He thinks his one solution is best and won't give it up. If the meeting has moved on, he'll break in and make it go back to his point.

DISTRACTOR

Refuses to get down to business. Cuts in with inconsequentials. Leads group off subject. Whispers to member on left or right.

Besides Nuisance and Destructive types, there is another problem category, the Silent Members, who are discussed in Chapter VIII.

Any chairman can furnish one example after another of problem members. His customary handling of them is to suppress them. He controls the meeting. He has a bag of tricks to help him cope with Nuisance, Destructive, or Silent Members. And he is rated tops among chairmen if he can do this suppressing job with a high degree of politeness and charm.

The scientists have found a better way. They have found

how to channel these destructive forces into constructive ones, how to employ the same energy to enrich and organize group thinking. But change cannot be made without changing the mechanism and spirit of the meeting itself, any more than one can kill bacteria without changing the culture in which they grow.

III

ONCE OVER LIGHTLY

LET US assume, for the moment, that you are the chairman of a small group. Or, when next September rolls around, you will be. Maybe it's the local school board or a committee of the Scouts in your neighborhood; perhaps a group formed in your church or office. In any case, having considerable pride about that group, you'd like to make a success of it.

Somewhere or other you have heard that there are new ways for groups to work together through which, at long last, the responsibility of the leader is actually shared by the members; through which a decision can be reached without voting and without Robert's *Rules of Order*. The possibility sounds interesting but utopian, and you are a practical man.

Research may be all right for the social scientists, but they don't have your group on their hands. They don't have to come down hard on Joe Ellison, week after week, to keep him from running the show. They don't have to put up with that little Mrs. Buck, wasting everyone's time while she finds a mental pigeonhole for every statement; or with Hortense Nelson, who never stops talking; or Andrew Mack, who never begins. They don't have to remember all the personal likes and dislikes and arguments, and try to straighten them out. If the chairman doesn't run things, who will? If there are no votes, how will the group ever make a decision?

Although you're willing to tackle anything that promises

more successful meetings, you'd like a once over lightly on the general subject before going on with details. So here is a brief picture. The key to it, as we've said before, lies in a shift of attitude on the part of both leader and members, with changed methods to reinforce—indeed, to help create—the shift.

At tonight's meeting all the same people are there (your neighbors and ours), all the difficult ones and all the articulate ones; Joe Ellison, Mrs. Buck, Hortense Nelson, even Andrew Mack, and a number of others. They are still recognizable, but they are behaving differently.

There are only fifteen people present (ten or twelve would be an even better number; too many people tend to split up into more than one group). They are sitting in a U-shaped group around a table, as groups usually do when they have a table large enough. But the open end of the U is occupied not by a chairman, but by a large blackboard, or an easel with a pad of big sheets of paper.

Less time than usual is wasted in getting this meeting down to business. (Only in heaven would *no* time be wasted.) Before the very first of these new meetings took place the participants filled in a "problem census," saying what they thought the main job of the group should be. At the first meeting they agreed on the general goal. At the end of each session thereafter they decided which phase of the general problem they would discuss at the next, so they don't have to follow a chairman's agenda or wait for him to say, "I thought tonight we would talk about . . ."

Indeed, the chairman as we have known him in the past has departed along with his agenda. The leader sits at the table on a par with the others, a symbol that he has exchanged his old position as boss of the group for an even more valuable

That familiar trouble-making look

one: its stimulator. He opens the meeting. He is distinctly its leader, but his job is not to control; it is to help all the members contribute to the solving of the group's problem. And the members' job is to share his.

The meeting proceeds with a degree of informality which would make Mr. Robert turn over in his grave. Not only do the members call one another by their first names (a detail, but one which promotes closeness and greater freedom), but they have a kind of first-name attitude toward each other. They all—and particularly the leader—turn facts, points in discussion, and suggestions into questions which are thrown out in a general way to the whole group, not to an individual.

Instead of cutting off argument or controlling it, the leader and the others deliberately try to get all points of view out in the open. That look on one member's face—for instance, that familiar, trouble-making look—which they used to try

to ignore, they now see. With the knowledge that if that member gets rid of whatever he resents now he will be the readier to make a positive contribution, they try to find out what's on his mind.

The members and leader share another job, too: that of focusing the discussion. Even the best group is made up of human beings whose normal equipment seems to include a tendency to wander off the subject. But in this meeting the members' shared responsibility helps channel the talk. Besides, they have specific aids to help keep that discussion on one track. They have what's called the leadership team—the leader, the blackboard member, the recorder, and the observer—which has been at work as the meeting progressed.

Andrew Mack, for instance, has been taking charge of the blackboard in this session. He's been writing down all the important contributions, so any member who is tempted to investigate a side issue has only to look at the board to be pulled back. When the talk gets going so fast that people forget the blackboard is even there, the leader can remind them, or Andrew can himself. So can Hortense Nelson, the recorder.

In her job she is doing somewhat the same thing Andrew is doing at the board. But she's not going to erase it. She is making notes of the gist of the discussion so that she can write up the main points to mail to the members before the next meeing.

Joe Ellison, the one who talks so well and has so quick a grasp of problems that he used to scare the others into silence —what's he doing? Joe has a new role, and although his job keeps him from saying anything, he doesn't mind. He's the observer, who makes notes, not on the discussion, but on *how* the group discusses. Since the observer usually doesn't

talk until the end of the meeting, we'll leave him, for the time being.

The back-and-forth of argument, the hammering away at a problem, goes through several stages until decision seems almost to come of itself—of which more later. When these decisions do come, they are better decisions and will be more effectively carried out than those obtained by voting. It is implicit in the very act of voting that some members disagree and perhaps will stay forever unconvinced. "If they'd only listened to me, this wouldn't have happened . . ." In the traditional meeting members are very likely not to "listen to me." In this kind it is imperative that they do.

About forty minutes before closing time the leader breaks off the discussion and gets the group to round it up. Then the members decide what problem they want to work on at the next meeting, volunteer for the various leadership jobs for that meeting, and are ready to make out what is commonly called, for obvious reasons, their p.m.r. sheet—post-meeting reaction sheet.

On this they write what they thought of the meeting. What was good about it? What was only fair, or worse? Were they able to say the important things they wanted to say? And so on. . . . (See samples, Appendix I.)

Filling out these sheets is their first backward glance at how the meeting—as a meeting—went. Joe Ellison starts them on another.

For this is Joe's moment, and for what is left of the time he becomes in effect the leader of a new phase of the meeting. From the highlights of his notes (which he had time to go over while the group made out their p.m.r. sheets) he asks questions to start the group on what is known as the evaluation—when they look back on the meeting and the participa-

tion in it. Reminded by Joe's questions and the specific details he has to give them, they talk it all over and analyze it.

This is the part of the meeting which, surprisingly enough, is hard to bring to an end. Everyone likes reconstructing the past—of a meeting as well as a football game. "If we'd done this . . ." "If somebody had only given John a chance there to come in with his point . . ." "If we'd stuck to the subject, instead of . . ." "Well, next time we'll see that . . ."

But come to an end it does, and with it the meeting—not more than three hours after it began, and preferably two.

IV

CAN THE CHAIRMAN STOP BEING BOSS?

BEFORE any chairman decides to take on this kind of meeting, we suggest that he figure out first whether he can stop being boss. For that flattering role of expert and authority will be his no longer.

Take Edward Norcross, for instance. He's a fine chairman: hard-working, good-humored, quick, and a "good executive." He already has more jobs on his hands than anyone else in the community. "If you can get Ed Norcross," people always say, "everything will be all right." So they get Ed Norcross, or perhaps Mrs. Norcross, who runs as many committees as he does.

Almost all members, beginning with the chairman, bring to a committee their old ideas of how a group should function. Even more important, they bring old habits of group action. Past experience has convinced them that any group is only as effective as its chairman, no more and no less. The successful chairman, in all the groups they've met with so far, has been a combination of spark plug, organizer, and driver. Using his own powers of persuasion, he can be relied on to bring together the people who, he feels, will be the most likely to carry out his plans.

Those plans are already well thought out in his mind. He comes to the first meeting with an agenda. He explains to

That old and established relationship

the members what the problem is, how they are going to tackle it, what they should get done. He hands each a carbon copy of his agenda and then, with that completely likable smile of his, he sits back and says, "All right. Let's go."

He has not once pounded his gavel. In fact, he hasn't any visible one, but it's there all right, and the members know it. They follow his lead—faithfully or supinely. If they aren't happy in the situation, they drop out rather than question his authority. They expect authority in their chairman. Frequently they have been chairmen themselves, exerting that same kind of authority. In fact, their sole yardstick for measuring a group's performance is how quickly and effectively the chairman gets them to carry out his program. This is what his committee expects of Ed now.

So it's a major hurdle for both Ed and his members to get

over that old and established relationship between them—much more of a one for Ed. The members will usually change their ideas without much difficulty; sometimes just one good demonstration creates enough enthusiasm to do that. But changing their basic *habits* is another thing. It is bound to be slow and arduous, for it is learned through doing. At first the members will devise various kinds of resistance—and so will Ed.

He can't get over this hurdle unless he feels a real, not an assumed, conviction that his members are capable of solving their problems—not his interpretation of the problems but theirs. He may think he's convinced, but when it comes right down to it—well, isn't he really better prepared to understand what it's all about? Could he really trust the members to figure out the best solutions? If he were being completely honest with himself, he might even ask: What if they agree on something I don't like?

He can bolster his confidence in his members if he considers three points, the findings of investigations [1] made in recent years:

1. Though a few superior individuals may be better in their judgment ability, the average of group judgment is superior to most individual judgments.

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[1] G. B. Watson, "Do Groups Think More Efficiently Than Individuals?" *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (1928), pp. 328–36; T. W. Thie, "Testing the Efficiency of the Group Method," *The English Journal* (1925), pp. 134–37; K. Gordon, "Group Judgments in the Field of Lifted Weights," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* (1924), pp. 398–400; M. E. Shaw, "A Comparison of Individuals and Small Groups in the Rational Solution of Complex Problems," printed in *Readings in Social Psychology* (1947), edited by Newcomb and Hartley; N. R. F. Maier, "The Quality of Group Decisions as Influenced by the Discussion Leader," *Human Relations*, Vol. III, No. 2, June 1950.

When a problem involves a number of people, group thinking will produce better results than the thinking of any one person.

2. A group is more likely to accept good suggestions than to reject them.
3. Groups do not err as soon as the average individual does.

A chairman should also remember that the reward for waiving his old rights and privileges includes the greater interest with which the members will carry out decisions. For when he steps down as authority and lets the members really share the responsibility of planning, defining, and deciding, he is bound to enlist and release a new energy in his group.

This approach to groups and committees won't help a chairman to drive harder and faster toward *his* goal. It doesn't provide ways to make him, the leader, feel or become more important. It does help make the group more productive and drives the members harder toward their own goal.

If you are a chairman can you see yourself fitting into that framework? Can you change your committee habits? Can you agree with the following premises: that members of your committee bring to it all, or almost all, of the knowledge, experience, and ability needed to enable it to get what or where it wants; that members are responsible individuals who, with proper stimulation and assistance, are more capable of finding working solutions than you alone; that the group can achieve its purpose, without your control, if you can create and maintain a situation in which the members will usually be willing and eager to contribute?

If you can agree with these premises, can you rebuild your habits around them?

Lao-tse, the Chinese philosopher, once put the problem very neatly into one sentence:

> Of a good leader,
> When his task is finished, his goal achieved,
> They will say,
> "We did this ourselves."

How to Go about It

The tool with which the leader works, in order to stimulate talk and contributions from all members, is the question. This is not used in the way to which he may be accustomed, the traditional technique of asking one member after another around a group what he has to say, but, as we explained earlier, by throwing questions out to the whole group. Straight questions, not ones which are weighted in one way or another with, "Don't you think . . . ?" or, "You don't think, do you . . . ?" Also, since the leader is not the authority, he does not answer most questions which are asked of him but redirects them to the group as a whole.

Before long this technique becomes a matter of habit. The leader can even use these questions to the whole group to move the meeting along to a new phase of discussion, or to create any other necessary activity. When the need for a summary becomes clear he can give that too in the form of a question, which invites members to comment on any parts of it they believe inadequate.

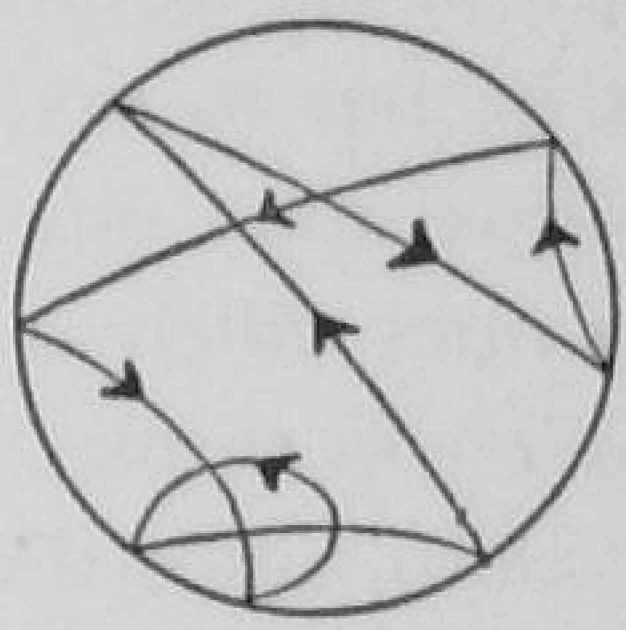
It is the job of the members, as well as of the leader, to become sensitive to the needs and abilities of everyone in the group. But the leader sets the stage for this, particularly in the early meetings before the members get used to carrying their responsibilities together. The member who has been written off as generally useless, too shy or inarticulate, is

accorded the same respect as those who talk well and come up with what have always been considered the best ideas. These may still prove to be the best, but they will be more convincing to everyone if they are tested by the contributions of all.

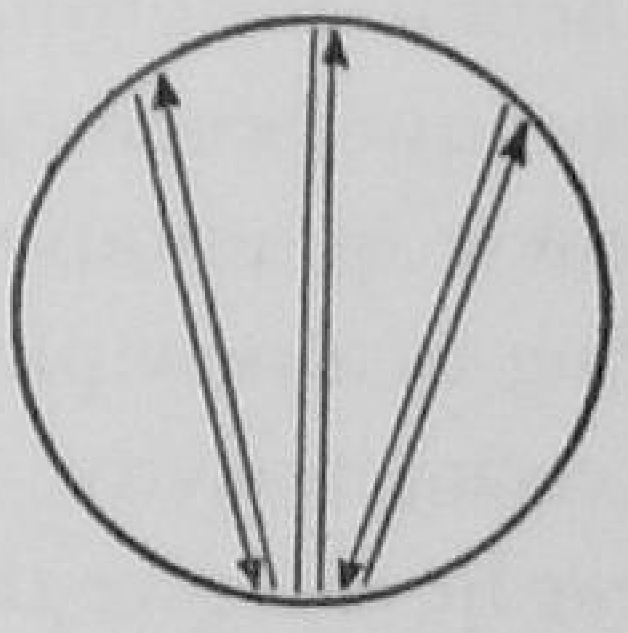
The Leader's Part in Discussion

The leader interferes with the discussion as little as possible, letting it flow back and forth within the group. It neither routes through him nor is dependent on his permission.

Like this . . .



Not like this . . .



This is not to say he cannot cut in if no one else helps the group out of a troublesome spot. For example, he may stimulate the discussion or balance it by giving the weaker side a chance to state its points more fully. He may summarize a point, to give the group an opportunity to move along if it is ready; he may get a hearing for a shy member who obviously wants to break in.

If the members are to thrash out all misunderstandings and anticipate as many difficulties as possible, they need time to think out their comments and let possible solutions develop. Even if the leader can sense where the discussion is heading, he stays out of it. Except for occasional questions, he lets the members work their own way through to the outcome. Otherwise they will not feel really convinced that it is the best solution for them as a group.

Even if they all become silent, the leader lets them handle it themselves, without jumping the gun. Keeping the discussion going on the subject is as much their job as his, even when they are new at the technique. Brief lulls are no reflection on his adequacy as leader; they are often actually productive. The members are usually silent because they are thinking. Before the leader cuts in with a question he gives them ample time to break the silence themselves. When they get off the subject, the same technique holds: he gives the members plenty of opportunity to get the discussion back before he breaks in to assist.

The leader is not disturbed, either, by a sudden flow of gripes about the situation the group is discussing. That is a way people have of clearing the deck for action. As they get complaints out of their systems some remark will give him a chance to ask, "What can a group like ours do about that?" or some similar questions which will bring the discussion back to the subject.

As the members learn to be responsible the leader's problems steadily grow less. Throughout, he has the leadership team of blackboard member, observer, and recorder to help him. He also has the checks and balances provided by the blackboard itself, by the post-meeting reaction sheets, and, most valuable of all, the members' self-evaluation.

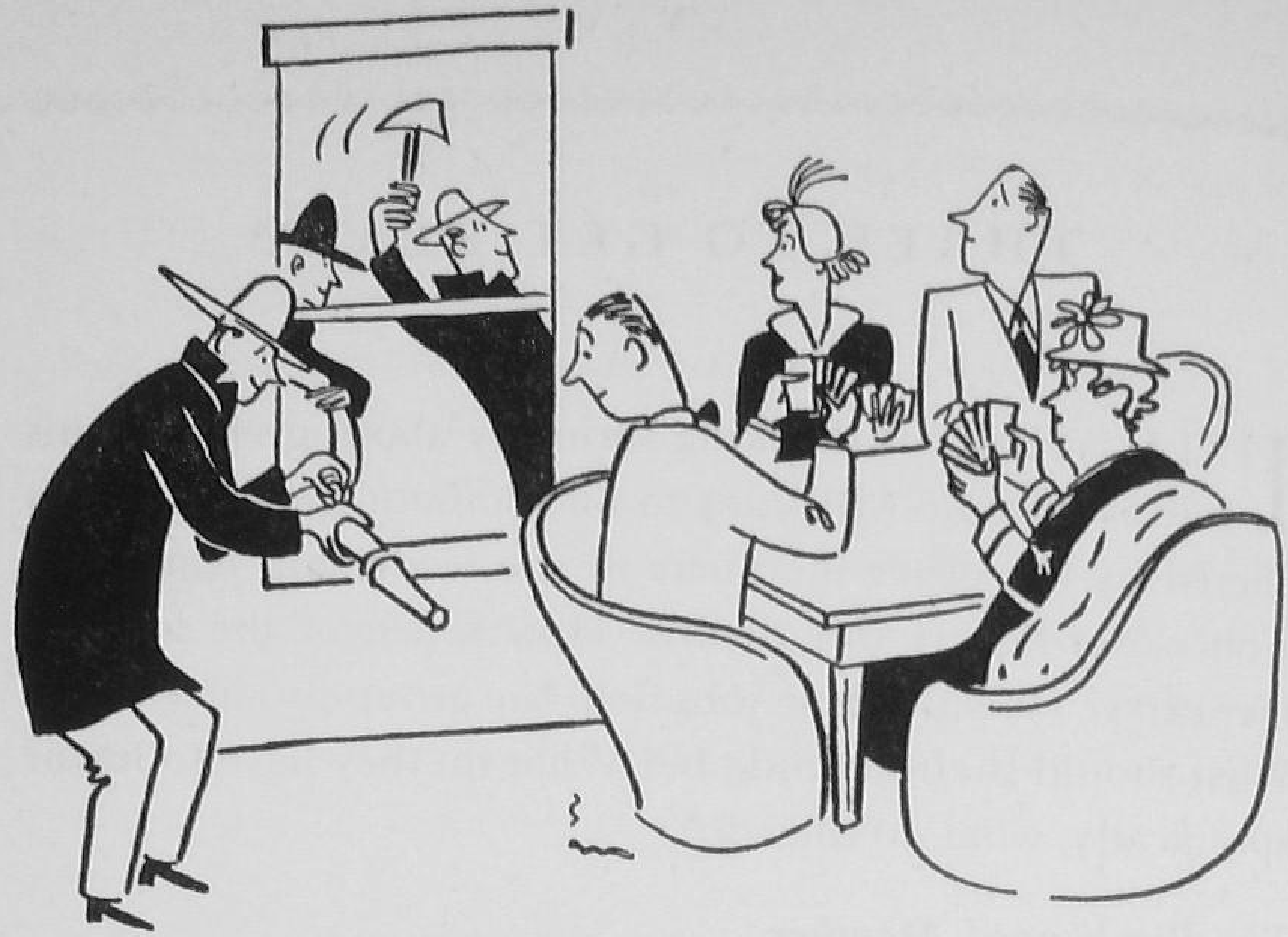
Some Pitfalls the Leader Can Expect to Meet

His biggest problem at first is the feeling of loss of control of the meeting. Without the use of his old habits and techniques, he may find himself swinging to the other extreme and letting the meeting run without any guidance for fear of doing something wrong. He can avoid this quandary quite simply by not trying to reach perfection in one jump. For the first meeting, if he selects and uses a few fundamental guides and ignores the others, he will come out surprisingly well. Every leader has to decide for himself what his key guides should be. These may help:

1. Plan the opening questions in advance.
2. Don't lecture or answer—ask; ask the group as a whole.
3. Don't interrupt unless it's important.
4. Watch for chances, when the group seems to have talked out a point, to push toward the goal.
5. Relax: it's the members' responsibility too.

A lesser but common problem for a leader new at this game is the inclination to direct his questions to individuals. One antidote he may find useful is to remind himself frequently that he is there to help, not direct. Another is to remember that if a few members don't talk, for the present that is of minor importance. They will later, unless he squelches them.

A third possible difficulty in an early meeting is the sudden realization that the main discussion part of the meeting is almost over and no solution has been reached. If this happens the leader should say something along the line of, "We have just so many more minutes before we have to cut off. Let's see what we can pull together out of what we have up



Don't interrupt unless it's important

there on the board and what we've been saying here. What have we agreed on so far?" He will normally be both pleased and astonished at what the group will then produce.

Problem behavior—with which all chairmen struggle—is a pitfall in itself. In these meetings the leader shares this problem with the group. It's one of his real compensations for giving up his authority. Since this is a group problem, not primarily the chairman's, it is discussed in later chapters.

V

THREE TO GET READY

IF THE leader is thinking seriously about giving up his role as boss, he will want to know about the help that is offered by the other members of the leadership team. Not a once-over-lightly but details. How much of the load do they carry? How do their jobs help the group produce more? What should their attitude be? What do they have to learn? Specifically, what do they do?

The Blackboard Member

Let's go back to that possible meeting where the members are sitting in a semicircle with a blackboard making the closing of the U. Andrew Mack, the once silent Mr. Mack, is standing there writing the meeting's problem across the top of the board, and all the others are watching him. He is there, not by reason of his silence, but because he volunteered to do this job at the last meeting. To tell the truth, he's enjoying it.

Whatever he puts on that blackboard should be important, and it's up to him to recognize importance when he hears it. When the members start digging at the problem, they'll ask themselves, "What is the situation right now? What are the main facts?" And as they mention those facts, he will put them down. In no time he'll have a good-sized list—long enough to make the members take time to look it over, to think about the items, and wonder which ones they have missed. After a few seconds George Costello will come up with

an additional one; so will Virginia Fox. Then there will be a silence. Someone, perhaps the leader, will say, "Well, is that it? Is there anything else important?" Another pause while everyone thinks. The leader breaks it by saying, "If that does it, how about starting a list of the obstacles? What objections would there be to our doing . . . ? What would be the first one we'd run into?"

At that point Don Seaman suddenly comes to life. "Wait a minute, we've forgotten something. It's important too. How about . . . ?"

So Andrew picks up his piece of chalk to put down Don's fact, but someone else interrupts with, "No, that isn't right; it's this way . . ." In the discussion that follows, Andrew gets the wording on the board the way the group wants it, and they all move on to the next phase of the discussion, the obstacles or objections.

What has the blackboard done to the discussion?

For one thing, it has kept the members' attention focused. For another, it has put their ideas where they can see them, where they can study them to decide which points are missing. Also, it has probably kept them from bringing up the same point several times. They have the same facts, the agreed-upon facts, right there where they all can see them, where they can't help but see them, and refer to them.

That is how the blackboard works.

But what about Andrew, trying to write what the group wants him to write? After all, he's just an ordinary fallible group member. How can he do it? How can he learn to recognize key points when he hears them and get them down fast enough to keep up with the discussion?

Surprisingly enough, it's not as difficult as it sounds. Some people will be better at it than others, of course, just as some

people are always better in certain jobs than others. But almost any person who is intensely interested in helping the group produce can do it. The core of the technique is this: the blackboard member concentrates—completely concentrates—on the thread of the discussion, as a tennis player watches the ball. If he's listening intently enough he forgets to be self-conscious. He forgets to worry over how his performance looks, or whether he's choosing the right words, or what the members are thinking of him. He doesn't have time, in fact; and out of that intent listening the vital points seem to come to the surface and identify themselves.

Once he has recognized a key statement in the discussion, he can either write it down immediately, without asking for confirmation, or break in and ask, "Shall I put that point down this way?" Which he does depends somewhat on the temperament of the chalker. It also depends on the stage and tempo of the discussion.

Say that the group is at an early stage, breaking down a subject into its elements, as when listing obstacles. Everyone is trying to analyze that subject, to figure out what problems in it need to be resolved. Members may be thoughtful, on the whole quiet. When a member does speak he does so tentatively, and he usually makes an easily recognizable point. Or points from members may come fast in a kind of pell-mell fashion. This requires fast work on Andrew's part—but he can do it if he writes the gist of what he hears without bothering to ask for phraseology.

Similarly, he may have to write fast when the group is trying to reach a decision. For when a solution is just around the discussion corner, vital points may come very suddenly indeed. And these are *not* worded as separate points. In the thick of concentrating on the solution, an idea which pleases

everybody may just burst from one member; then ideas start popping from all sides, and all Andrew can do is get down key words. He does not interrupt then if he can possibly avoid it. If he does he distracts, postpones, and generally messes up the discussion, which may have been almost at a decisive point.

If he's been concentrating, Andrew is well aware of what's happening. He recognizes the approaching crisis in the discussion even more than the members who are involved. His ear is tuned for just that. As soon as the going slows down a little he breaks in to ask, "Have I got everything? Have I said it right?" If he doesn't do this, the group may soon find that what he has written has lost all meaning for them—and along with it a valuable part of the record.

His being in a position to do this actually provides him with a tool of considerable power. From his strategic spot at the board, he can help—or hinder. If he's concentrating hard enough on the discussion, he's temporarily like the coach of a football team; he can see which players are doing well today, what plays could be most successful; he can see when the team is slowing down, when it's stalled, when players aren't pulling together well enough. He can see when a change in attack would help the team along—and he can provide it.

For example, by asking someone, "Did you mean . . . ?" he forces both the member and the group to decide whether that point is worth putting down. That may start a discussion over the point and its wording. Is that good or bad at that moment? He has to decide. He may cause useless backtracking, or he can sharpen the issue to make a decision come sooner. He may bring things to a complete halt, or redirect them into a more fruitful channel.

It's not at all impossible for the blackboard member to take entire command of the situation by directing questions and writing down only those points which contribute to his personal objective. It has been done, and not to the speedier reaching of group ends, either. For when he takes advantage of his dominating spot in this way he becomes a boss, an autocratic leader, and restricts the group by his own limitations. (Incidentally, this is the reason the leader should *not* be the blackboard member.)

It is not likely that Andrew's ego will goad him into taking over the show. But in case it does (maybe he's always had a hidden yearning to be boss), the members will soon be aware of it and resent it. If some of them become obviously annoyed, or the production of the meeting is threatened, an evaluation by the observer may be suggested then and there. If things aren't too bad it is better to wait and let the observer bring the question up when he starts the evaluation at the end of the meeting. It then falls in with the general looking-back-at-their-own-performance of the group and doesn't make Andrew a single target.

The Observer

It was no great coup to get Andrew Mack to the blackboard, but we must admit our pride in having made Joe Ellison a good observer. For until the last twenty minutes of the meeting (unless the group wants an evaluation earlier) Joe has to be quiet, and it's not easy for him. He has dominated more meetings than most people have ever thought of attending; he's a natural at handling words and ideas and, most of all, people.

He did the job of observer a few meetings ago, but it could hardly have been termed a success. He gave in to that hardest

temptation of all: he broke into the discussion several times. He was supposed to start evaluation on the part of the members, to spark it. But Joe being Joe, the job was too much for him. When he was finally given his chance to raise the questions the meeting made seem most important, he took over and talked for the entire twenty minutes. But tonight's meeting is his second go at it. He is controlling his propensity to talk, and he is concentrating on the others' performance. He is not only learning how to handle the job; he is developing a new slant on how members, himself included, act in a productive group.

So he sits with the group, in the semicircle, but he says nothing. He makes notes frequently, glancing first at this one, then at that. He notes how often Hortense Nelson speaks, how often Mrs. Buck; whether another member feels free to talk, or starts to and gets stopped because someone else is louder and more emphatic. He sees whether one or two members monopolize the conversation, and he's watching the leader too—how he affects the group and how the group affects him.

Although he is not concerned with subject matter as such, he needs to follow the discussion enough to note when members go off the subject, when they backtrack or quibble. Or, if the members leave the job of keeping the discussion on the subject up to the leader and don't bother to do it themselves, he notes that. He's been called, and rightly, the eyes of the group. He is their ears as well, listening for pertinence, frequency, and interaction of the contributions.

He becomes—and even Joe Ellison can manage to do it—a kind of alter ego for the leader, who is necessarily absorbed in the progress of the discussion. No matter how hard he tries, that leader gets too caught up with the "what" to be fully

aware of the "how." Some of it, of course, the leader senses and realizes, just as do some of the members. There was that point in the discussion when, down the table to his left, one whole segment of the group was quiet for too long, but he didn't have time to stop to get the situation right. Or that other time when he let himself get into a debate with the member on his right. He didn't mean to, but it happened without his realizing.

Joe Ellison, in his job as observer, is there to do the remembering and the realizing for him. And for all the other members as well.

The Evaluation

Unless the group has asked for his observations earlier, the end of the meeting is Joe's first chance to talk. While the others are writing down whether they thought it was a good or bad meeting and why (on the post-meeting reaction sheet), he works over his notes.

Then the moment finally comes when he is practically the leader of a second, though brief, meeting. Like the leader, he does not try to run that meeting; he tries to stimulate the members to run it. But he has to start it off, to spark it, using those notes and observations he has been making as the opening signal. First, he talks *briefly* on the general aspects of what he's observed, the highlights, and then gets down to asking questions about specifics. They might run about like this:

"I wondered, early in the meeting, whether everyone really got the same idea about the objective. That time when J. B. said . . ." (referring to his notes) ". . . and a little later Hal commented that . . . I wondered whether they were both saying the same thing in different ways or whether they really

meant different things. The group seemed to support J. B.'s version. Had you overlooked a problem at the start to cause that confusion? Did nobody really understand it? Is that why you came back to it later?"

Or, if the discussion clearly went off the subject: "You spent about ten minutes talking about . . . Did that really have anything to do with the subject? Why do you think you went off in that direction? How did you finally pull out of it? Could one member have pulled you out sooner?"

(Many observers use "we" instead of "you" to lessen any feeling of criticism.)

By which time, if not much sooner, the members should be well launched on an analysis of one phase or another of the meeting and their activities in it. They are like bridge players who delight in going back over their hands to discuss how they played them. Joe is the official kibitzer on the play of forces within the group, but, unlike the usual kibitzer, he is provided with notes to start that backward look. That is what he is there for. His questions may be helpful in themselves, but they exist as a springboard for the group to reach their own conclusions.

His questions focus the thinking of the members on what the group did well and what it might have done differently, perhaps better. They are objective, impersonal questions about decisive points in the discussion: times when it might have taken a different course or dug more deeply into the problem. It's as though he had taken an X-ray of the group's activities and reproduced the highlights and shadows.

The questions may be of various kinds. He may have been asked to watch for specific types of participation (see Chapter IX) and restrict his notes to jotting down evidences of those. He may focus on how well the members stay on the subject.

He may watch particularly how they support one another in drawing out facts or developing viewpoints. Or he may concentrate on the leader's performance (at his request), noting where he could well have cut in, or given support, or asked questions which would have furthered the discussion.

Can Joe do all this? Yes, strangely enough, Joe, or Andrew Mack, or even Mrs. Buck can do it. (Although Mrs. Buck will have to conquer her tendency to be superconscientious; she will want to begin at the beginning of her notes and read them through, a sure way to put people to sleep.) Like the job of blackboard member, the observer's requires concentration of a selective sort. Andrew, at the blackboard, listens for one kind of thing; Joe listens for another.

The first member to take the job of observer in a group often finds it difficult though absorbing. If he feels he wants to practice it first, he can observe one meeting without starting the evaluation at the end. Instead, he and the leader can go over his observations later in an evaluation session of their own. This tryout is usually enough to enable him to do the whole job at the next meeting.

Normally he doesn't start the group's self-evaluation until the end of the meeting, but he may do it any time during the session. If the leader or one of the members feels that things are bogging down badly, that contributions are too uneven or even acrimonious, the group can ask the observer for help. His questions, judiciously asked, can usually get the conflicting forces in the group back into balance.

The Recorder

There is one other semi-silent member of the leadership team, the recorder, who makes a record of the highlights of the meeting, the gist of the discussion (not the details, which

no one remembers or cares to remember). In addition, like a secretary, he lists the members present, the place, the names of the leadership team, the time and subject of the next meeting. He prepares a report which, if they wish, is sent to the members before the next meeting. This report is not read at the meeting as minutes would be.

Like the blackboard member, the recorder has to do a tall job of concentrating. Perhaps he can best help himself to do that concentrating by jotting down, "Subject," "Content" across his page (see sample, Appendix I). He may not fill his page in that precise pattern, but it makes a useful start. He too can focus the discussion, or bring it to a halt, by asking for the repetition of a point "to be sure I get it into the record correctly." But to push the discussion one way or the other or to join in it is not his function. He does so only in extreme cases, when no one else rallies to help the group.

During the evaluation he often has to struggle between his own itch to get into the talk—often the most alive and intense of the whole meeting—and his need to get the highlights on the record. He wants to say what he thinks about the meeting, and if he does, you can count the record lost from then on! And not well lost either, for the evaluation is one of the most valuable parts of the session and needs to get into the record.

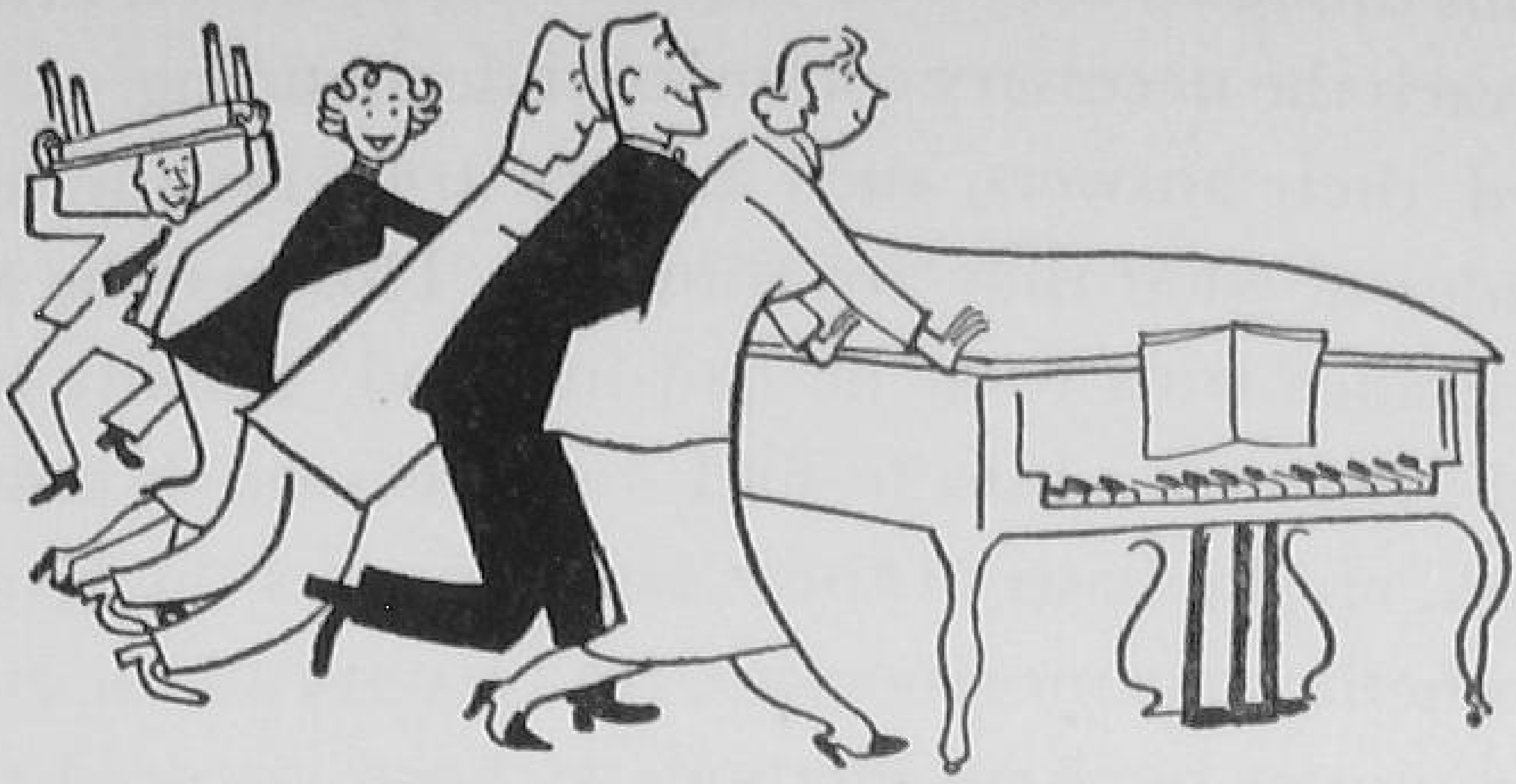
VI

IT'S NEW TO THE MEMBERS TOO

THE MEMBERS of most groups have attended regulation meetings until they know the old line-up by heart. Some of the members are ready for anything that promises a change. They don't see that they have anything to lose and they might just stand to gain. They are curious and willing. Others are open-minded but not dissatisfied enough to want to accept new responsibility. Without some preparations, the introductory meeting could be a spectacular failure, after which even the willing members might be ready to chain the group more tightly than ever to Mr. Robert's strict limitations. The preparations take a little time, but they are worth it.

The Problem Census

Since this method works by getting all members enough interested in the group's purpose so that they will work to accomplish it, the first move is to find out what the group think its job is. The leader has taken on an assignment and has a clear idea of the goal, but he does not know what the others think. It's probably pretty hazy to some of them, and even if they have defined it clearly, the chances are slim that their thoughts correspond with his. A common understanding of basic purpose is the first thing the group needs to achieve. Therefore a premeeting survey, what is called a



Play active parts in this project

"problem census," will start the process of mutual rather than separate thinking.

By mail or telephone, the leader lets the members know as much as he does about the essentials of the job ahead and asks them to answer a few questions, such as these:

1. What do you think is the reason for this group's existence?
2. What do you think our big problems are likely to be?
3. How do you think we should go about solving them?
4. What difficulties do you think we'll run into?

This problem census has several purposes. In the first place, it gives the members, from the beginning—indeed, from before the beginning—a responsibility for participating in decisions they formerly left to the chairman. It serves notice that they are to play active parts in this project. Whether they answer the inquiries or not, whether they come up with any concrete ideas or not, the starting signal has been given.

Second, it serves to start their minds in the direction of deciding their own goal. Even though they give it very little

conscious thought, they will be more ready at the first meeting to reach the necessary common understanding.

Third, their answers, such as they are, give the leader a rough idea of what they are thinking. This may be at complete variance with what he had in mind. Usually it is. So much the better for him to find it out as soon as possible.

Fourth, on the basis of these same answers the leader can decide whether the members are ready to try all the attitudes and techniques of these methods at once, or need to have them introduced gradually. In using a piecemeal approach, a leader helps the members learn to handle the different responsibilities a few at a time. In an all-at-once introduction, he explains the whole idea to the group and then starts right in with a full leadership team and group evaluation. The rest of this chapter outlines an introduction of each type, but the leader is the best judge of which (or what) method will be the most successful with his group. The outlines that follow are offered only as suggestions.

The All-at-Once Introduction

Experience has shown that the best way to handle this is along the following lines:

1. A preliminary talk with the key members.
2. A dress rehearsal with the leadership team.
3. A demonstration meeting of the whole group.

The Preliminary Talk

The need for the leader to have that preliminary talk with key members is of course obvious. The general idea, even if already discussed with them, is not enough. Now he wants them to form the group's first leadership team. In preparation

for the first meeting the talk needs to be specific and practical. It also helps for the leadership team members to tell the others that the leader is planning to suggest a different way of handling meetings.

The Dress Rehearsal

This is a must for the leadership team if the first meeting, coming up in a week or so, is to be a success. The members of this all-important team need both a common understanding of their jobs and a chance to practice them. The four of them can best get the feel of what they are going to do by having a preview session, which isn't for keeps and where fumbles won't make any difference. The rehearsal can do double duty by having the subject of discussion "Leadership team jobs and how to handle them."

The leader directs the dress rehearsal, using the questioning technique. While he discusses with the recorder and the blackboard member, they make notes as they will at the demonstration meeting. The observer stays out of the talk, as he will at the meeting. When the session is over, he practices his technique by raising questions about the leader's performance and that of the other two members. All four then evaluate the joint performance and perhaps even make out sample post-meeting reaction sheets.

The rehearsal comes to a close with two final bits of arranging. One is the selection of a subject for the group to discuss at its first or demonstration meeting. Since the first job is to be sure that the members have a common understanding of what they are to achieve, a discussion of the group's purpose makes a good subject for this demonstration meeting. Or, since this is to be a try-out session only, it might

be better to help the group learn more about the new techniques by discussing what, from their experience, makes meeting failures and why. Let the leadership team decide which subject fits the group better.

The other necessary bit of preparation is for the leader and the observer to arrange that the first questions to be asked at the end of the demonstration meeting will be aimed at the leader's behavior. Discussing his actions objectively will set the pattern. It will also confirm what the leader has been saying about not being an authority and about being ready to accept criticism.

The Demonstration Meeting

Word has been sent out, before this meeting takes place, that it will vary from the usual. But there can be as many misconceptions about what is going to happen as there are members. They need a brief explanation from the leader on the key points of leader activity and member participation, and how these are geared to help a group produce more. After this, it is not only polite but good sense to ask whether they would like to try it. Since this is admittedly only a trial performance (and the leadership team is all set to go), persuading the others ought not to be too difficult.

But the explanations are not over. The participants need to hear from the other members of the leadership team. Each, in fact, should give a *brief* summary of what he is going to do in the meeting and why.

The demonstration meeting follows, dealing with the subject chosen by the team. It closes forty minutes ahead of time so the members can fill out their post-meeting reaction sheets, and the observer can raise his questions to start an

evaluation of the try-out by the members themselves. He starts, as agreed, with the leader's performance. "Do you think," he may ask, throwing the question to all the members, "that X was a bit too dominating at such and such a point? Did he give you enough chance to talk? Why didn't somebody break in? Were you all satisfied with the decision?"

Or, if the leader kept too much in the background, he may ask, "Did X have some special reason for not helping more when everyone was trying to figure out . . . ? Should he have suggested alternate approaches?" Just a few questions along one of these lines should be enough to start the members on their own backward glance at the meeting's strong and weak points, and at how well they worked as a group.

Finally, if the members decide to continue this kind of meeting, they choose the problem they want to work on and the leadership team for the next session. They are bound to suggest that the same team and the same leader carry on. For the leader to continue for a few sessions is sensible. Until the group learns to work together smoothly, it needs the same person in that position.

But it is important to have different members assume the rest of the team jobs for the next meeting. It shows the group that the new method does not belong exclusively to the original few. It reinforces what has been explained and demonstrated: that every member is an equal participant. In later meetings teams can serve for two consecutive meetings so they can benefit from the first experience, but not until every member has performed at least one leadership job. Right now it is more important for three additional members to profit from the better understanding that work on the leadership team provides.

The Piecemeal Introduction

Few groups are ready to tackle all of the new method at once. They are interested, but certain aspects seem strange and questionable to them. The blackboard may seem a first-rate idea; they may like the recorder too. But they may be dubious about the other ideas. This is approximately the reaction any leader may expect when he suggests a change in meeting habits to his members. If it seems wise to progress through the familiar to the unknown, their comments can reveal a workable step-by-step schedule.

The change-over might be still more gradual. It is possible for the leader to make many of the changes without even mentioning that his methods are different. His first step is to change his own technique into that of not answering questions but turning them back to the group. Though he is definitely in control of the meeting, the members feel a greater sense of freedom. Without knowing why, they are more inclined to talk. At this same meeting, the leader can man the blackboard himself and ask the usual secretary to get down the gist of the discussion rather than make exact minutes. At the end he can probably get the members to decide the group's purpose and select the subject for the next meeting.

From then on how fast he moves depends on the receptiveness of the group. The post-meeting reaction sheet, confined to two questions, is probably the next step: What did you particularly like about this meeting? What did you particularly dislike? Although the members do not sign their names, they may make their comments hesitatingly. But once they realize that the leader really wants their opinions, they will

give them—more freely and honestly as the meetings go on and they begin to think about themselves as a group. Further evaluation then seems not only reasonable but usually happens of itself. Without knowing it, they have paved the way for the observer. From then on a leadership team seems a natural and useful tool in the struggle to get more from meetings.

The face-saving factor for all concerned in either of these introductions, or any modification of them, is that the whole group is inexperienced. The members realize that they are all in this new effort together. They want to make their meetings more productive, and the ways are at hand for them to use. When one or another member bungles as he works to convert these attitudes and techniques into habits, it is part of the common effort, and no one is likely to hold it against him.

VII

DISCUSS AND DECIDE

EVERYONE works better when he has a chance to help plan a job and when he knows what it's all about. But few people have that chance. Government plans for all of us; management plans for stockholders and often for labor. Topside plans for those below; national plans for regional, regional for local.

At the bottom of this pyramid is the usual chairman, planning for his group. He has been asked or told to take the job. Matching zeal to a sense of duty, he works out an agenda, perhaps a year's schedule, and goes off to his first meeting content that in due course he will get his group's active support.

Due course doesn't always follow. His group is like any other; it is made up of human beings who balk at being expected to carry out a program that they have had no part in shaping. On the surface they are compliant and receptive; they adapt themselves to the traditional pattern of a hard-working committee. Underneath—whether they realize it or not—they are still balking. They resent doing special jobs for the group. They fail to come to meetings or they come late; they fail to contribute when they are there and they give the problem only partial attention, feeling subconsciously that after all it isn't their problem—it's the chairman's.

What's more, that problem is probably different to every member. The chairman has thought it all out; he explains it

at the first meeting and then goes on to Heading No. 1 on his agenda, taking it for granted that he has covered the situation. He has, but only for him. The members jump to their own conclusions and interpret his explanation accordingly.

Remember that Railroaded Meeting described some time back? The group had met five times, each time going ahead with plans and arrangements very much in the manner of the famous knight who leaped on his horse and rode off rapidly in all directions. This was a "training committee" on whose shoulders fell the job of planning a year's program for hundreds of people. It was at the fifth meeting that one of the members was defeated in an argument. Irritated and hurt, she sat back in her chair and said suddenly, "Well then, I guess I just don't know what we're here for!"

She honestly didn't know. Neither did the rest of the committee really know. At long last they went back to what should have been their first consideration: they got down to discussing what kind of training they should offer.

No committee will really know unless its members figure it out for themselves at the beginning, at the very first meeting. If they have filled in a problem census (see page 43) they will have made a start toward helping to plan and decide. In that census, however, they were still limited by their own interpretations. Each member was traveling a different road, taking off from a different point. The roads must converge, or an endless number of meetings will be at least partially wasted.

Reaching a Mutual Understanding

If the leader does not have an agenda in his hand, what can he substitute? How is he going to start off? How can he

get a roomful of people, even if it's only fifteen of them, to agree on one definition of their purpose?

He starts the meeting with a set of questions instead of an agenda. He has turned the various opinions of members, culled from the returns on the problem census, into a series of questions which will begin the process of reaching agreement. Or if he feels the need of others, here are some which may prove useful. At the outset they may seem to have little to do with the group and its purpose. But they (or others like them, better adapted to the particular situation) should generate the right kind of thinking. Through them the leader can circle the field to make a pinpoint landing:

1. Why is there a need for this group?
2. What is the immediate situation in respect to that need?
3. Why is the basic problem what it is? What is its background?
4. Why are we interested in it? What do we want to achieve in relation to it? What is reasonable to hope we can achieve?
5. Is there an opposition? Who comprise it? Why are they opposed? What are their superficial reasons? Their valid ones? How far can we change that opposition? (Or, for a group with another kind of purpose: What is the opposition? Lack of awareness of the problem? Lack of training? Lack of interest? Of support?)
6. For whom are we planning? What will be their reaction? What will they think? How can we include their thinking in our planning?

Not only does the leader ask these or similar questions, but when answers come he questions those answers. He questions

Throwing questions to the group

a statement he thinks may not be clear, one which sounds obscure; he questions whether every angle has been brought up, always throwing these questions to the group as a whole, not to an individual.

This first general investigation of what everybody is there for is perhaps more important than any which will follow. What is arrived at is far more than an agreed definition of what the group's job is. A course is being charted, and quite incidentally problems are being discovered that will be met with along the way. The entire group is, perforce, planning the project. The members are coming up with their own agenda and in the process getting a sense of personal possession about the job ahead.

While this has been going on, the blackboard member has been writing one point after another. All that is said cannot of course stay on that board; there isn't room. So what he

does is list facts pertinent to one stage of the discussion; when the group has moved on to another he erases, with safety because the recorder has a list too and can read it at any moment. This written record frees the blackboard member to concentrate on immediate issues and to check with members frequently.

The field narrows until at last the group is finally ready to say with unanimity: This is our job. This is what we think we can get done, and this is how we hope to go about it. And the group is then almost equally ready to say which problem should be taken up first.

Discussing a Problem

No discussion in the world could, or does, follow an unvarying pattern. If it did, it would be only because it was so tightly controlled that it could hardly be labeled free discussion. But it is helpful to have in mind the general form the talk should take, in order to make progress. It's even more so to block out that pattern in a corner of the blackboard at the beginning of the meeting:

Problem
Related Facts
Obstacles
Solution

Once the problem has been stated, it can be written across the top of the board as an ever-present reminder, and the listing of "Related Facts" begun.

The related facts that need listing may be all too familiar to everyone; or only a few may be really pertinent. The members need to explore what they do know about the subject, however, in behalf of a common understanding and for those members who are less well informed.

Step number three is to list the obstacles. The leader's job is to ask what experience or information the members have to offer which bears on the core of the problem and will lead toward its solution. He will probably ask this for the first time with the feeling that he is inviting the flood—the impulse to tell one's own experiences not being limited to a *Kaffeeklatsch*. "Why, when I went to see that man, you should have heard what he said . . ."

In this kind of meeting, however, there are various lifelines to help keep discussion on the problem: the blackboard member who is writing only obstacles which have a connection, the recorder who can break in with, "I'm fascinated, but I'm not getting anything for the record," and the members themselves. It is, we repeat, their responsibility. They will be aware that one person is monopolizing the time, and they can either call a halt or, if necessary, call for the observer to start an evaluation.

But if this flood of obstacles is on the subject, let it come. The first points may be obvious, but they should be listed anyway since they will suggest others less obvious. Let the gripes come too; the sooner they are off the griper's chest, the sooner he will concentrate on the discussion.

During this listing stage at least one member will see a beguiling blind alley and start down it. He will think a new fact or obstacle is so closely related to another that the two should be listed as one. For the moment the group thinks so too. This package-listing always has an appeal, but the group will progress faster if it sticks to rapid listing, whether ideas appear to overlap or not. Stopping to argue over what-belongs-where will only bore the members, just as working out by-laws bores them—and wastes time.

Occasionally the listing stops for lack of essential informa-

tion. There is no way out of this but to let a member volunteer to produce it at the next meeting, or bring in case studies dealing with a similar situation (if these are to be located), or—a last resort—get an expert to come in.

This direct procedure, from "Problem" to "Related Facts" to "Obstacles," is, of course, the ideal. It just doesn't happen that way, as any group member can testify. The orderly pattern is still on the blackboard, but it's erased from everyone's mind. Facts and obstacles are likely to come simultaneously. A fact suggests an obstacle, or one is implicit in the other. If that happens, the group may want to work on the two lists at the same time.

At this point someone (watch it, Mr. Eager Beaver) is sure to jump in with a solution long before the others have even begun to figure out the obstacles. Tempting as that suggestion may be, the group will be further along an hour later if the members recognize it as a good idea but ask its author to bring it up again when they reach the solution stage.

The problem chosen for the meeting may turn into a minor one by revealing in the process another which is larger and more basic. That is a serious matter. Is the original problem still the one to be resolved? If not, can the group tackle the larger one successfully, or will it need help? (Chapter XV may give some clues.)

To meet these inevitable pulls in contrary directions the group must remain flexible and meet each situation with whatever action is required.

Estimate of the Situation

Finally the lists are on the board and seem to be complete. When that time comes and the talk slackens off, the leader's job is to find out whether the group is ready to move on.

"Are all the facts and obstacles listed? Is everything down on the board that we need to know?" But he does not answer that question or accept just one member's answer. He doesn't even imply the answer—or his eagerness to get-on-with-the-problem.

Once the list of obstacles is complete, it's time to go on to the stage of analysis, with an "estimate of the situation" such as army officers are trained to make: Which obstacles should be attacked first? Because of importance? Because they make later ones easier? Because important dates set automatic deadlines which must be met?

Reducing the Obstacles

The big questions in analyzing each obstacle are these: Is it fundamental or superficial? Is it only a symptom of more basic trouble underneath? What is that basic trouble? Can the group tackle it directly with some chance of success or is outside help needed?

Various viewpoints should come out at this point. If they don't, this is no discussion. Either agreement already exists, or the members are not expressing themselves. Since it is important for the group to find out which, the leader might abandon his questioning technique for the moment and himself suggest an opposing view.

If he sets up this opposition vigorously enough, some members will take his argument apart and start a discussion that will bring out real disagreements. If he gets nothing but flat disagreement—all the members maintaining a united front against him—then the only sensible conclusion is that they are all agreed in their point of view. That obstacle is worth wasting no more time over.

But say the discussion really is one, with arguments going

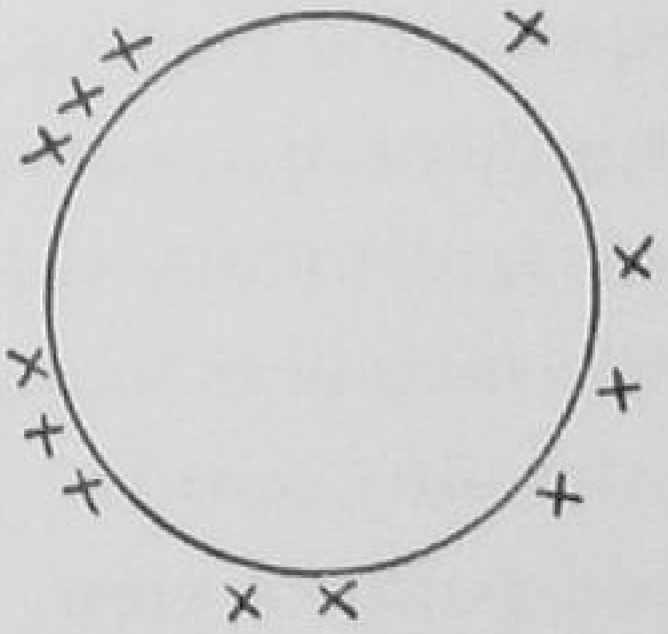
back and forth, questions raised, solutions offered and rejected, points of view coming into sharp outline. What then?

The leader, watching this back-and-forth play of conviction, should stay sufficiently outside of it to be aware when two well-supported viewpoints or one major trend develop. At this point the traditional chairman would put the question to a vote.

But there is no voting in this meeting. Even though the leader may realize that a solution is probably not too far off, he doesn't try to anticipate it. The closer the decision comes to being unanimous, a mutually-arrived-at solution, the more actively will the members carry it out. This is particularly true when they are expected to get the concurrence of other people in their decision. If they are to spur others to action, unanimity is almost essential. And, as we mentioned before, experiments have proved that a group reaches better decisions than an individual. If a premature decision is pressed for, or a matter is decided by the opinion of a bare majority, the resulting solution is weakened.

The Before-Decision Stage

When the discussion of any problem begins, the general situation can be illustrated thus:

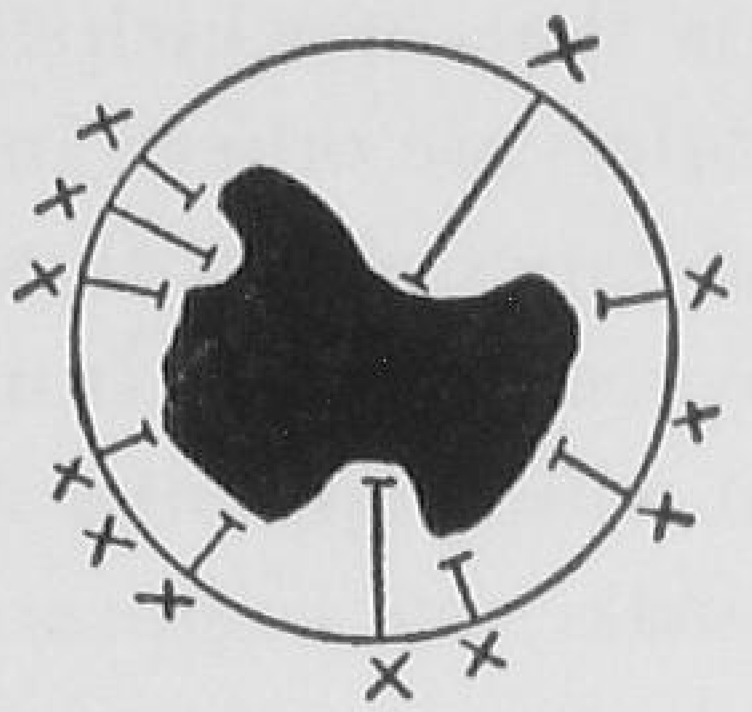


The circle represents the entire scope of the problem, obstacle, or point being discussed. Each "x" represents the

initial, unexpressed, and often unknown position of a member.

As the discussion goes on, most of these positions become known. The members either state them or ask questions which are a clue to their attitudes. The facts and forces underlying these positions also become apparent.

Each group member is then able to make a kind of mental separation of his fellow-members' positions into those there is some chance of changing and those about which he feels he can't do much—at the moment. The situation then can be diagramed as in this drawing:



The lines drawn toward the center of the circle represent those aspects which appear unchangeable for the present. The shaded portion represents the comparatively limited area in which there is a chance of agreement. Members without lines have not yet indicated their positions.

The stage indicated in this diagram, a line-up of attitudes, becomes steadily more apparent. Sooner or later a few members recognize it and are ready to move on toward a decision.

Occasionally at this stage the leader or a group member can make a summary which may help to push the group forward toward agreement within that limited (or shaded) portion where it is possible. The summary may have the effect of clearing the air and injecting a sense of order into the

arguments. If it is limited to that cards-on-the-table summary, all well and good. But if someone then feels the need to go on and discuss the summary, everyone's time is wasted unless it enables some member to get rid of a frustration.

Usually it is simpler and quicker for the group to bypass the summary and try directly for a solution. Any member who has been following the discussion closely can start by proposing a tentative plan which might be worked out within the possible area of agreement.

Types of Decisions

The next stage is that in which the solution develops. Though there doubtless are others, in our experience those solutions are of four types. All of these differ (although on the surface they may seem similar) from the traditional compromise solution in which opposing members offer to give ground. Since they make that compromise offer simply to be obliging, or in trade for winning at another point, their willingness may be a far cry from conviction, and their carrying out of that decision only halfhearted.

An integrated solution: This develops when members piece together constructive elements of their positions in a way that all can accept. They make acceptance possible by respecting the unchangeable aspects of all members' positions. Even though the solution may not go as far in some directions as some members may wish, they recognize that the group can go no farther. The process is like putting together one jigsaw puzzle from a box which contains parts for three or four.

An unexpected solution: This usually comes suddenly, based on a suggestion which points a new avenue of thought.

The member who suggests it may have worked it out consciously or unconsciously—a kind of inspired flash. In either case it respects the taboos of the various members and can be worked out within the tacitly accepted discussion area. This solution cannot of course be counted on. When it comes it may be received with acclaim and the solution speedily chalked up; or it may be accepted warily and subjected to considerable testing by the group before enough members are willing to think out its detailed applications.

The throw-back solution: This is apt to happen when most members find themselves in agreement but one or two are strongly opposed to some points of the proposal. This minority may be holding out for personal reasons: either their arguments have not had the attention they feel is deserved, or they have not had a full chance, earlier, to express themselves. Going back over the ground in a sympathetic way, without irritation, may provide a solution by solving the personal point; or it may clear an earlier issue never properly resolved. In this process the majority may subject those holding out to a detached (and sometimes very concentrated) analysis of why they feel the majority points are not acceptable. The discussion may focus only on specific points; or it may, alas, have to go back over the whole problem. Though this sounds lengthy, it produces a solution, whether integrated or unexpected, which will be carried out well.

Solution through role-playing: This is the spontaneous acting out of a situation to explore the results of one decision or another, or as a means to reaching a decision (see Chapter XI).

There is also a type, which could be called the "unopposed solution," not listed with the others because it is so frequently no solution at all. It should be thoroughly checked before

the leader or the members accept it. If it isn't, it may operate like a double-take in the movies. Some time later the members will wake up and realize unhappily the implications and results of the decision made so hastily, and with such apparent agreement. All they can do then is start back over the ground again, or, what is worse, go on regardless. So that air of happy agreement should be treated with due skepticism.

VIII

SALVAGING PROBLEM MEMBERS

IN ANY normal situation few people can hold out for long against the wishes of a group. The feeling of separation becomes too strong. If they are ignored they feel as isolated, as set upon, as though they were actively opposed. They may fight for a while, but in the end they either withdraw from the group or make peace on any terms which will let them save face.

Making peace isn't enough. Neither is compliance. What everyone wants is to turn the resistant member into a contributing one, an attitude which obviously must be shared by all members if it is to succeed. In a group functioning along the lines we have described, there is more than attitude to help them. Every stage of the process is geared to throw the emphasis away from the individual and toward the group. Every technique—even the evaluations at the end of the meetings—are so group-centered that most individual hurt is gone.

It is important to try to absorb all kinds of members and to weld them into a productive group before a divided pattern has become set. But it is also important to remember that the suggestions which follow are illustrative rather than comprehensive or infallible. From the psychological point of view, the apparent motives behind these, or indeed any, types of behavior may not be the real ones. Everyone has feelings and motives which he does his best to disguise. Particular

Absorb all kinds of members

behavior must be treated within the context of the particular situation and the individual involved. The following suggestions, however, if they are applicable, may show constructive ways through which a member may be brought to recognize that his behavior is disturbing the group and may be helped to change accordingly.

Handling Nuisance Types

Just being part of a group that honestly wants to accomplish something and knows what that something is can be relied on to cope with most aspects of the nuisance type, for these flourish in the meetings classified previously as the Lambs-to-Slaughter. This is the group that doesn't fully know why it's coming together and is never given a chance to find out; in short, the group that has not bothered to make a problem census ahead of time or to agree on a mutual goal.

The nuisance type of member, like the nuisance child, exists mainly in a situation where he hasn't enough to do. A job he's helped to plan makes sense to him and he soon ceases to be a nuisance.

But in the early meetings these nuisance types are almost bound to exist. The health of the group depends on letting them come out into the open rather than trying to suppress them.

The Pigeonholer and Hair-Splitter: These types are enough the same to be lumped together. The Pigeonholer who wants to put things down in a notebook will get over that pretty rapidly. Faced with the blackboard and the fact that a copy of the recorder's notes will be sent him, he loses interest in his private notebook. But the one who wants definitions and who must ticket and package every bit of new knowledge before accepting it is a real nuisance, the more so in that he feels a great sense of superiority and virtue. "If it weren't for me . . ." he reasons.

This breed often turns up in a new group and requires considerable patience, understanding, and sometimes active support on the part of the other members. From the viewpoint of group health, this member needs to have his say, but not—unless an exact statement is necessary—his way. For the search for exact shades of meaning quickly becomes quibbling.

Why bother, then, to let him talk at any length? For this reason: most of us have to achieve some kind of prominence in a group. We have to feel important. The Hair-Splitter operates the way he does because it was his way of getting attention in a Robert's *Rules* kind of session. So he should be allowed to talk and be important, even though it delays the group at the start. If he is thwarted, he will

feel the group is against him. He will turn into a resistant member and be more than a mere nuisance. If he has his share of attention and respectful consideration early, he will then normally share the group decision, and as the group matures he will grow along with it.

The Eager-Beaver and Explorer: These types, who grab at all new ideas, are apt to offer solutions whether they've given them any thought or not. But they don't have to have the patient consideration given to the Hair-Splitter. They're usually good-humored and can be treated matter-of-factly. As the process of discussion forces them to back up their premature solutions, they learn to control themselves. Working with a group that is serious enough, they channel to productive ends that enthusiasm which made them such a nuisance at the beginning. They sincerely want the group to succeed and are the stuff from which fine working members are eventually made.

The Fence-Sitter: With him it is important to know why he's sitting there. Either he has no confidence in himself and his own opinions, or he has a special reason for being sure he does not offend certain members of the group. He doesn't dare jump on one side or the other until he's sure of the verdict of those he considers key people. Even if all the members are new to him, he's likely to size them up quickly (as all of us do in a group), decide who's the dominant member, and wait for his cue from him.

There's little use in trying to get independent opinions from this member at the start, but the treatment which should produce them has to begin then. Obviously the permissive atmosphere has to come in here, the free, respectful attitude that should distinguish this kind of group. Try to get him to participate in the analysis phase of a problem—

and let his opinions go. Other members can ask him if he has questions to raise or facts to offer in that analysis. If anything he says gets real consideration, he'll slowly gather courage and may begin to say what he thinks, not what he thinks he should think.

In office meetings of any kind, this member can become useful and contributing only if the boss makes it possible. In fact, any meeting which a superior in rank or status holds with his subordinates runs up against difficulties which only that superior can solve. The man who says no, and why, when he thinks no, is one of the most valuable workers any office or industry can have—if the superior in rank can take it. If he can't, he won't give more than lip service to group participation anyway. Even if he can take it and wants to, his actions have to prove again and again that he holds no resentment before any but the hardiest members will take him at his word.

The Wise-Cracker: He is the group clown, one of those who, whether they know it or not, are hunting importance, some means of making themselves stand out from the others. He has better hunting ground in a less serious group, in which the others are bored or aimless and welcome diversion. Should the group get absorbed in its work, the impatience with which the others view the wise-cracking is enough to end it. The various methods we have described to help a group produce more will normally make him productive too.

The Superior Being: He is the not so common but very annoying member who looks down his nose at the whole business. Perhaps he didn't want to be part of the group in the first place ("I'm allergic to committees"), and agreed to join only because a friend persuaded him. He may repre-

sent his staff or feel it's his community duty. Whatever the case, he's apt to become the most resistant of all.

The group's best course is to find a problem, or an aspect of one, which interests and affects him. This may happen naturally; if it doesn't, specific effort should be made to slant the subject so that it catches his attention. He should be made to feel the group wants his opinions, regardless of how superior and indifferent he appears, and how irritating that appearance may be. The evaluation at the end may be used to arrest his interest, and also to give him notice that his indifference does slow things up. The observer can say, "As you watched and listened today, X, I suspected that you had some ideas that would have helped us. For instance, on that point about . . ." Roused from the indifference he hoped he was getting away with, X probably comes through then, and later.

Silent Members

There are various types of silent members. The group's problem is to figure out the reason for that silence and act accordingly.

Some silent members are really constructive. They are:

1. The member who is not very vocal anyway and is in substantial agreement. He stays silent until some argument or proposed action upsets him and catapults him into the discussion. His silence does not need to disturb the group because it does not mean resistance or withholding.
2. The member who likes to listen to the argument and weigh all sides before he makes up his mind. There is a good possibility that he may bring forth a sudden and very workable solution to a problem.

Those who are destructive are:

1. The member who does not understand the problem or has not followed the action and hopes it will become clear if he just waits long enough. He doesn't like to confess his situation. If not cleared up, his misunderstanding may cause trouble later.
2. The member who is waiting for a moment to break in with a personal issue or some point which seemed good to him when it occurred. The discussion may long since have moved on but it is *his* idea. He liked it and he means to get it in. In the meantime he's lost the gist of the discussion.
3. The normally vocal member who suddenly becomes silent. This is usually a form of resistance. He may not like the course the discussion is taking, or he may feel his contributions have not gotten the credit they should. He is the adult counterpart of the child who throws down his cards or ball or what-not and stalks off with, "You're not being fair."

What's to be done about these silent ones? In the first place, it's well to recognize that contributions will always be uneven, varying with the intensity of interest, experience, and, of course, personality. But research has shown that everyone will be aggressive about something. In a continuing group it is worth while to find out what the something is to each of the members who are continually silent.

The next necessity is for the members to differentiate between the kinds who are sympathetic and interested and those who need help of one sort or another. Members generally are surprisingly quick at making this distinction, often as early as the second meeting. Those needing help require

different kinds of treatment, depending on the reasons for their silence.

The one who is silent because he is confused, and therefore embarrassed, finds the permissive atmosphere of this group his greatest support. The tone of respect given the opinions and contributions of all members creates in him a sense of freedom, not to mention courage. In the beginning the leader will probably have to set this tone, until the other members share the habit, with his techniques of throwing questions back to the group and interfering with the flow of discussion as little as possible. Also, when the emphasis is on reaching agreement rather than on striking quickly for a majority vote, these silent members feel they should express their confusion.

The member who's silent because he's hugging his private idea to himself and waiting for an opportunity to unburden it is on vulnerable ground. The truth is he should not indulge himself. The blackboard and the other members' impatience at his coming in with a long-since canceled point are usually enough to prevent repetition.

The member with a grievance should be given a chance to air it, as soon as possible. If this should not occur, the evaluation at the end can be geared to letting him do so. Treat him with honest seriousness and the group will rewin a valuable member. This is also an occasion for role-playing (see Chapter XI) if the group can take the time.

Reporting on special assignments, being asked questions of fact about a matter known to be in the silent member's field, and role-playing are all techniques to help draw out the silent ones.

Direct questions are used only as a last resort, and then preferably by another member, not by the leader. Far better

I want to be important too

for a less reticent member to say, "I'm confused about . . . ," whether he is or not, if he guesses that to be the silent member's predicament. Throughout, it's every member's job, not just the leader's, to recognize such predicaments and act on them in a way to help.

Destructive Members

Nuisance and silent types, given understanding and sensitive treatment, usually mature with the group process. They don't present a major problem.

But there are others, familiar to every meeting-goer, who can really destroy the essence of groupness; for they destroy participation in the discussion. They pull in one direction—their own—and they try to pull others with them. They are

usually articulate, potentially good members, and they must be coped with, or the group, as a group, is licked.

Someone has suggested that every member of a group should wear a large placard on his chest, stating, "I want to be Important too." This is the key to handling the destructive members (indeed, all members). But no one can be important at the expense of the others, and the following types are. In general they don't realize what they are doing, so the thing here, once their need for importance has been partially gratified, is to make them aware.

The Dominator: He's dominated so long he simply can't stop and he's lost all realization of how he's affecting the other members. Most often he has a first-rate mind; he is quick and articulate. He sees the problem so rapidly that it's a bore for him to wait until the rest catch up. Once aware that he's preventing other contributions, he can be a top member. It takes some doing. Try the following:

1. Put the cards on the table at evaluation. This may have to be repeated several times, but that's okay. Your Dominator is fairly tough.
2. Role-play the situation (see Chapter XI).
3. Make him observer. (Remember our friend Joe Ellison, who talked for twenty straight minutes at the first meeting instead of starting a group evaluation. At the next meeting Joe's group put considerable emphasis on the way an observer should function. When Joe was made observer again he did the job well.)
4. Ignore his comments. As soon as he finishes, another member comes in with, "I was interested in what Hortense said a few minutes ago . . ."

The Talker: He talks because he can't help it, a kind of

neurotic situation. He, too, usually has no idea of how he's taking over the meeting. Apply the same treatment as for the Dominator.

The Blocker: Hear him out—maybe his plan is good; if it isn't, he must be given sufficient proof to get him to admit it. He wants attention; give it to him, and he should get over wanting it. If necessary, when he has stated his position, make him explain it. Then make him explain the explanation, and so on until his case is worn so thin that even he recognizes how the other members must feel about it. Then, having given him enough attention and rope to hang himself, ignore him and go on.

The Distractor: He breaks into the meeting because he either is really bored or has no interest in what the group is discussing. Or he isn't getting the prominence he wants and is taking revenge this way. Try to catch his interest in the problem, or make sure he helps choose the problem for the next meeting. Also, treat his arguments or point of view with more respect at later meetings. It takes two to make a distraction. If the group is serious, his efforts will die for lack of response.

Manipulator and Belittler: These both use the back door to get status and importance. Give them attention via the front door and they'll change as the group grows. If the Manipulator is seriously trying to use the group for his own ends, putting a spotlight on him, giving him attention, is the group's best defense. Role-playing can help too.

The New Member: A new member may be the friendliest and most adaptable person in town but his newness makes him a problem per se: an unknown element which must be absorbed, a new force to be reckoned with. A brief introduction to the group is not enough. He automatically feels out

of things, shy, and hesitant. (This will be his inner feeling whether he talks or is silent). It is worth the group's while to take time out for explanations, almost to start again with him. He has to catch up on methods and techniques already familiar to the others. Role-playing may be a quick way to share his feeling. Above all, the members must realize that if they have been meeting for a time, no new member will easily be made a part of the whole. If they don't make him a part, he will keep the group from being as productive a unit as it should.

THE GROUP LEARNS TO PRODUCE

JUST telling the members of a group that they should share the leader's responsibilities is about as productive as for parents to tell the adolescent members of a family to be more cooperative. It may be a relief to parents' feelings, but it won't get them anywhere. Before either group member or adolescent will respond, certain very human needs must be satisfied. Each has to know that his help is vital to the project. Most group members who have come along this far will take on a new kind of responsibility for the group's progress. How far "this far" is, from the point of view of those human needs, might be summed up as follows.

Their need:	*Is satisfied by:*
to share the planning	problem census, defining goal, and choosing problems
for respect and confidence	permissive atmosphere
to feel their contributions count	attention and decision by agreement
to be given actual responsibility	lack of domination, rotating leadership
for an impersonal measure of progress:	
in discussion	blackboard and recorder
in group performance	evaluation, post-meeting reaction sheets

There is also another need: to recognize constructive patterns of behavior in a group, those which help to weld it

into a working unit and to accomplish its purpose. These are specific functions that one or various members may perform in answer to the demands of the discussion. As they feel the situation calls for action, they come through with the kinds they believe appropriate. In the descriptive list which follows you may discern a resemblance to the less pleasant traits in group behavior already mentioned—and rightly, for even a constructive activity, if carried on too long or exclusively, can become a problem to the group.

The test is always provided by the situation itself. Every member should ask himself: What will this question do to the discussion? Will it bring out something important, or am I just talking to hear myself talk? Will putting in this remark really help anybody see the problem from a different angle? If I give up arguing over this minor point, will it help to reach a decision? Will this or that decision be satisfying enough so we will all do something about it, after the meeting?

Productive Group Activities

Some Activities Enrich and Organize Group Thinking.

Initiating: suggesting new ideas, raising questions that push on the discussion. Group's best tool.

Clarifying: trying to make the meaning of various suggestions clear. It not only helps everyone but is the blackboard member's righthand aid.

Elaborating: thinking of results and difficulties nobody else remembers.

Integrating: summarizing and getting the group back on the point. Pulling related suggestions together. Often the key to a group solution or decision.

Some Activities Improve Analysis of Problems.

Fact-seeking: asking questions (rather than making statements) which help bring out pertinent facts.

Analyzing: asking questions or making statements to bring out the fine points and the reasons behind the obstacles. Getting *below* the surface, in addition to *Elaborating,* which covers things *on* the surface.

Activating: thinking up situations or questions to bring out the knowledge of the other members. Behind-the-scenes activity. Boon to the silent member because it makes it seem urgent for him to contribute, too.

Some Activities Increase Group Solidarity and Progress.

Encouraging: obviously an endearing trait in any member if he restricts it to honest encouragement.

Appreciating: keeping an open mind and modifying one's own viewpoints in the light of other, better-for-the-group ones.

Mediating: finding ways to reconcile clashing viewpoints.

Self-disciplining: suppressing the itch to lash out at other members. Keeping contributions on a reasoning basis. Pure gold.

Being group conscience: prodding the group to better or faster action. The quibbler's better nature.

To know, and recognize, these various activities actually helps members do a better job because people are quite willing to be constructive if they know how. For example, the discussion may be bogging down with the weight of facts and suggestions which really haven't anything to do with the problem. Somebody has to cut through the aimless talk and get it back on the subject, but the old hesitation at being

the one to speak up, the old fear of sticking one's own neck out, holds everyone back.

To break in at such a moment used to be the chairman's function. Now it is also the members'. Recognizing which are the constructive, helpful activities, they are more willing to exercise them. The knowledge, in fact, has even shown the Explorer and the Eager-Beaver profitable ways to use their energy and has given the Monopolizer pause. It prods the quiet members and strengthens those who lack confidence.

Have You Time for Analysis?

If the main job of the group is getting along well by now, it may not seem worth while to take time off for any kind of analysis. But even though the results are good, and are what the group was set up to get, results can always be improved. Participation can become still more effective.

The two following suggested methods for analyzing the group will not take much time from the subject matter. The first will not interfere at all with discussion; the second will only shorten it in part.

With the first method, the work on the problem continues as planned, but the observer limits his record for the evening to examples of both constructive and destructive types of member activity (with emphasis, needless to say, on the former). The group goes on with its work, forewarned of this special observation or not, as the leader likes. To make his job simpler the observer has a chart of these various activities on a good-sized sheet of paper, like the sample on page 80. He simply records each time (and with which type of activity) a member participates. Usually he can also manage to jot down on another piece of paper outstand-

ing examples of constructive participation. At the end of the meeting, while the members are filling out their reaction sheets, he totals up whatever participation record(s) he has used and plans his comments on the highlights.

SAMPLE OBSERVER'S SHEET

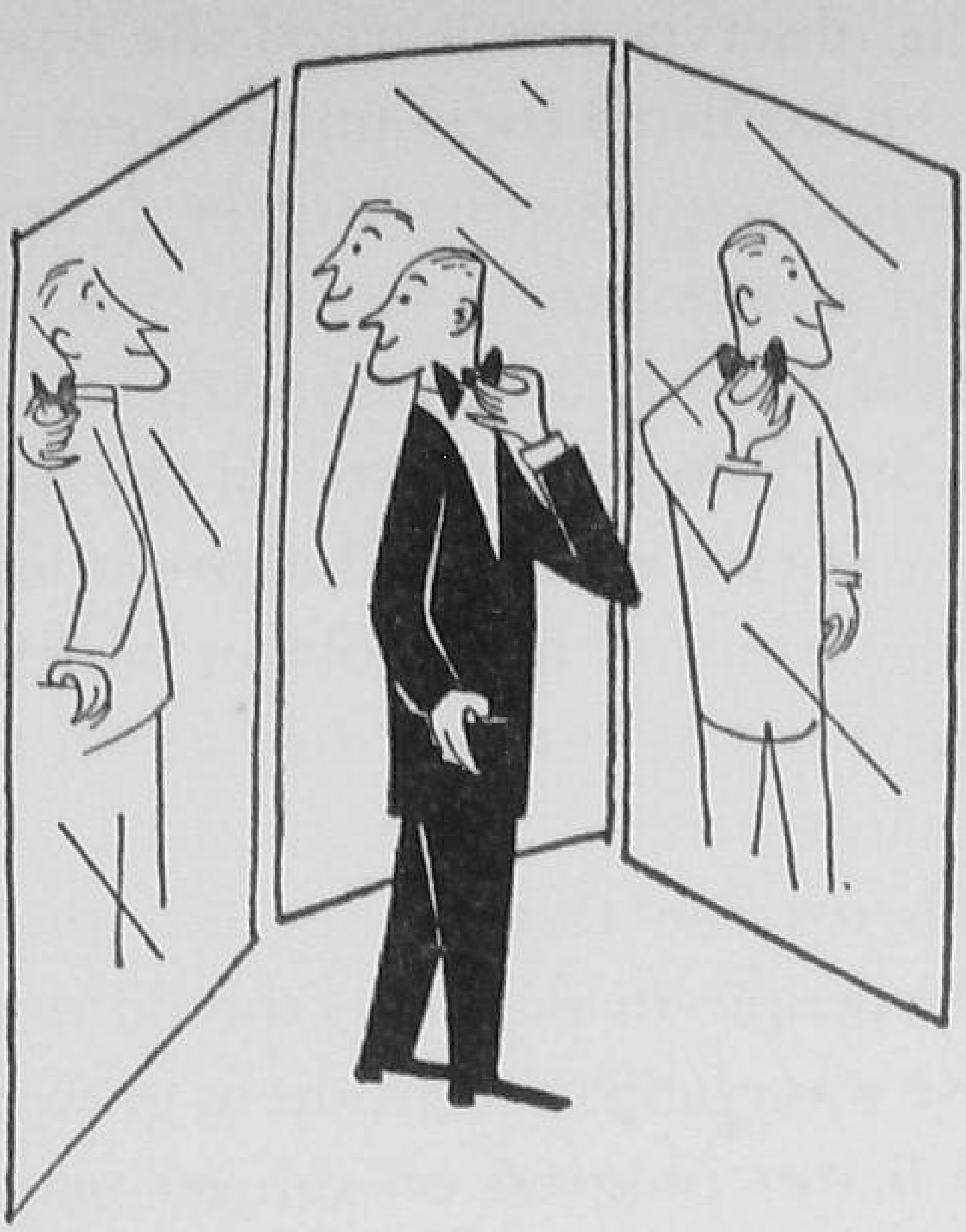
	Ed	Hor-tense	Joe	An-drew	Mrs. Buck	Geo.	Vir-ginia	Don	Roy	Ellen
Initiated	III									
Clarified		I								
Elaborated	III									
Integrated	III									
Sought facts	II	II								
Analyzed		I								
Activated										
Encouraged	II	II								
Appreciated		III								
Mediated	I									
Disciplined self	I									
Was group conscious										
Dominated	III									
Manipulated										
Blocked										
Belittled										
Distracted		III								
Split hairs										
Just talked										

Then, keeping a weather eye out for emphasizing positive traits, he starts in: "I don't know whether you realize it or not, but the questions people ask in a group and the things they say can be classified. That's what I've been trying to do at this meeting. Of course, I've had to do it fast, and make a lot of arbitrary decisions. I've probably made a lot of mistakes too, but it will give you the idea."

If the observer can give each member blank copies of his chart at this point, they will be better able to follow his comments.

"The thing you'll find it hard to believe," the observer goes on, "is how *many* times [1] people actually do participate in a meeting. I couldn't believe it either, until I watched it happen. Of course, I can't begin to go into all of them, but I'll give you the high points. I'll start with you, Mr. Norcross (or 'Ed,' since the group is probably using first names by this stage in its meetings). I thought you did a nice job on the whole, with—oh, well, maybe a couple of reservations. You initiated discussion three times. Remember how you came in there with that idea about . . . ? Then there were three times you integrated the discussion, pulled it together, and twice you asked for facts. Five of your questions were analytical, like the time you asked why . . . ? Twice you encouraged other people to say what they had on their minds. Then there were three things I noticed you did just once. You mediated what might have turned into a time-wasting argument between Joe and Mrs. Buck. When people finished talking about . . . , no one seemed sure what to do next, and you activated the group by asking about . . . The other time wasn't what you did, but what you didn't: from the way

[1] In a two-hour meeting the active members usually participate between thirty and forty times each.



This type of observation usually fascinates members

your face looked, you disciplined yourself. That was when . . . But about the middle of the meeting it got too much for you and you came in three times as a dominator. Remember? How did the rest of you feel about that?

"Hortense, the main thing I kept wondering about with you was whether you really cared very much about the problem. You did clarify once and elaborate once; and twice you checked facts and encouraged. But I also thought there were three times when you were a distractor. Am I right or wrong? Were you really interested?"

And so he goes through the list of members, winding up with, "Did I miss anything important?"

This type of observation usually fascinates members and gives them a completely new picture of how to do their share in helping a group get results. It's surprisingly simple to

do, too, once the observer has learned the types of activity and knows how he has listed them on his sheet.

The other method requires no observer, is nowhere nearly so revealing, and is admittedly less fun for the members. But it also works as a short-cut to improved production. This divides the meeting into three parts. In the first, taking no more than ten or twelve minutes, the group lists the things that keep meetings from getting results or bore the members. In the second part of the session, they go on to the job of the evening, whatever it is. Then, in the third part, they take time to discuss the things they did themselves that they'd all agreed people in meetings should *not* do.

Either of these ways helps the group to grow together and spurs it toward better progress on subject matter. But perfection can't be expected, no matter how group-conscious the members feel. Meetings are bound to be uneven; a controversial problem will suddenly split the best group in half; a Dominator (or Blocker) may get excited and force his position on the others.

Yet by this time the group should have strength enough within itself to absorb such shocks and to reduce them almost to zero by evaluating each session. If it doesn't, the leader had better check on himself. Something of his dominance as original chairman (or just his natural dominance) may be hanging on. If the group isn't producing enough, or is not sharing the job, it may be because he is giving in to a lingering desire to be boss.

X

DON'T BLAME THE EXPERT

NO MATTER how able and informed a group is, a time is likely to come when it needs outside help and decides to call in an expert.

Getting an expert is usually a matter of luck, one way or the other. He is asked (and often paid) to come and make a speech "on his subject." If he is entertaining the listeners are delighted—though some hours later they may realize that he didn't actually say anything that helped solve their problems. If he doesn't entertain, or his subject has nothing to do with their problem, they wait till he is well out of earshot and then say, "Well, that was a complete waste of time. We'll never do that again!"

Or there is that other situation, when the group goes to the expert.

In one instance ten couples, the parents of young children, began a study group with their county psychiatrist. A month later only four couples were going, and some of the rest were ready to drop out. Why? The parents not only organized the group in the beginning, but they picked the psychiatrist to run it. Their problems at home had not vanished, nor had their need for guidance. Nevertheless the attendance dwindled.

The fact was that they were getting no help. The psychiatrist was both expert and leader of the meeting. There was no doubt that he knew the subject; he was a reservoir of the

kind of information they were after. But the members of the group were abashed, or silent, or just polite, as though they were making dinner conservation with a stranger. They waited for the expert to start the talk; they waited for him to guide them. He was a double authority, being both expert and leader, and they reacted as they used to in the classroom, facing teacher. He, in turn, was clearly waiting for them to bring up their problems in a specific way so that he could give specific and appropriate answers. When they did not, he talked about experiences that *might* help them, or about points *he* thought important. It was a stalemate, but *it was not the expert's fault.*

Neither is it the fault of the expert when he comes to a group and makes a speech. The fault lies with the group.[1] It is the job of the members, not the expert, to see that they get from him the information they need.

Before Meeting with an Expert

Calling in an expert is often a lazy way out of a predicament, in that it signifies the end of responsibility on the part of the members. But if this is not the case, an outside authority may lead them out of any number of problems.

Even so, it's better to start with the assumption that the group can find its own answers. Then, if that assumption proves false, the limits of what the members know will be unmistakable, and a more specific estimate of what it needs to learn will have been made.

The group should decide first just what kind of help it wants from an expert. The following may be suggestive:

1. Do you want facts that will take too long to find

[1] The fault also lies with the group, or those planning for the group, if it is a large meeting with a panel of speakers. See Chapter XIII.

out or which you haven't the technical background to understand if you tried to look up the answers yourselves?

2. Do you want practical experience such as no one in the group has had?
3. Do you want help on your analysis of a problem?
4. Do you want answers on *how-to-do* something? Or do you want answers on *what-to-do?* Sometimes one expert can provide both, but the fact-man may be good only on facts; the how-to expert not an expert on the what. It's up to you to decide which, or you will expect a miracle instead of a human being.

If the group wants to make it easy for the expert, the basic questions should be in written form, not just in members' minds or in the mind of the one who is going to ask him to meet with the group. It will also help if he is told approximately how much the group already knows about the subject, and if each member has a copy of the set of questions to look at during the meeting.

Putting the requirements on paper will have another advantage. It will help the members decide just which of the experts they know (or have heard of) will best fill the need. Or if the right person has to be found by going through other people, written specifications will reduce the misunderstandings that almost always arise when a second person tries to explain a first person's meaning to a third.

All of this both sounds and is harder than just inviting Jim Carson, for instance, the amusing person who immediately occurs to all of you, to make a speech. Even if the group finally decides that Jim Carson is the man, this preparatory work pays off. Since Jim will either be paid a whopping sum

or be persuaded through the more ticklish route of social blackmail ("We can't pay you a thing, but we're all your friends," etc.), the group will want to get all it can. How does the group go about this?

Make the Expert One of the Group

Even when the leader has outlined the requirements for the expert, there is still the basic problem of how to handle him when he does come. He is an authority on his subject, and he will also be your guest. On both counts the group will be inclined to treat him with a polite but timid respect.

If he is put in the position of chairman as well, his dominance—and your timidity—will be reinforced. He may be an expert in his own field, but he's not necessarily an expert in drawing out a group. The meeting is likely to wind up with the same stalemate that faced the child-study group.

To get around this unequal and wasteful situation, the first step amounts to "Stay as you are." Don't make the expert a chairman.[2] Don't try to make him a leader, in the terms we have been describing. Keep the leadership team as planned for the next meeting, and treat the expert as any new member meeting with your group would be treated. He's there, remember, to help with specific problems, to answer questions, not to make a speech; to facilitate group thinking, not to dominate it.

The second step is to revise the group's attitude toward him so that although he has the respect any new member would be given, it's not subservient or willing to accept everything he says as gospel. It may be gospel all right, but it

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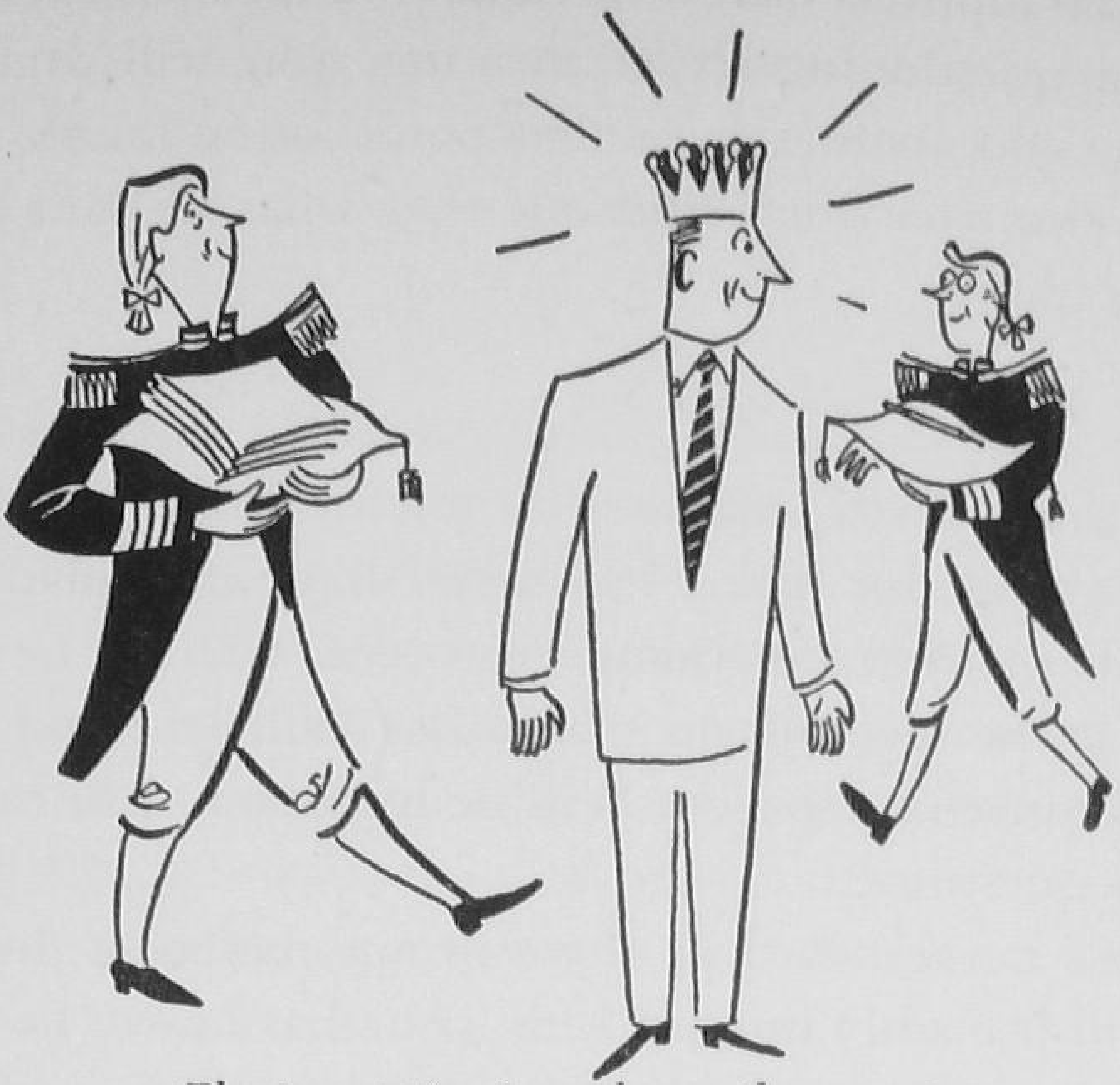
[2] Twenty study groups in a county PTA had actually been written off as failures until they changed the setup and separated the functions of leader and expert.



The temptation to enthrone the expert

may not be the group's gospel. He can only be as valuable as the members make him. Be sure that the group is really getting what it thinks it is, without letting important angles of the problem go unexplored. Then and there, ask him questions which might give trouble later if they remain unanswered. Pin him down to the specific problem. Otherwise, someone later will come up with the valid argument that, "Well, what he said was all right for that situation, but ours is different."

Incidentally, the temptation to enthrone the expert and let him take over the meeting will be a strong one. After hours of struggling to find solutions to various problems, here is a man who sounds as though he knows the answers. It's a relief to relax and accept them. But if this is done the group is reduced from a creative, working unit to a submissive audi-

ence. You suppress your own valuable experience and accept without questioning. Next meeting, you will argue over what he said about this or that point, often taking so long a time that you don't find out that what he said actually doesn't apply.

Set the Stage Ahead of Time

For the expert to assume the role of group member is a drastic change for him. He'd better have an explanation at the start of what the change involves. Will he be willing to tackle the meeting on that basis? Will he mind cutting out his customary speech? Will he be content just to answer and ask questions?

If he's never heard of these group methods, the whole idea will probably interest him. If he has heard, he may be eager to see them in action. Even that skilled speaker Jim Carson will probably agree to take a shot at it. And there are others who know as much as, if not more than Jim, who can be persuaded simply because they don't have to make a speech. Such a man, as well as any other potential expert, can be assured the group as a whole is responsible for helping him.

And responsible the group must be. Even though you've outlined what you want to know in the way of subject matter, it's only cricket for you to plan your own activity at that meeting so that it is easy for the outsider. He is not inclined to waste his time either, particularly if he is not being paid.

Since minutes of the last meeting and all the trapperies of Robert's *Rules of Order* have been discarded, the expert will at least not have to undergo that famous torture in which speakers have to sit through endless minutes, their eyes fixed

in a glazed look of attention on the chairman who "makes a few announcements" and calls for reports of the subcommittees.

But he may have to undergo a subtler form of torture if the group does not make a special effort to stay on the subject, not just any subject but the particular one on which he can help. The blackboard member and the recorder can be primed for an extra awareness on this point, but the other members have to cooperate or it won't be enough. The leader can start the meeting by leading the expert directly into the problem: "Were any parts of our outline unclear? Are there some questions you'd like to ask us before we start the discussion?" Hit immediately at the things which necessitated his coming, and don't wander thereafter.

XI

ROLE-PLAYING

ROLE-PLAYING is acting out a situation to inform, persuade, or create a deeper understanding in the group involved. The members themselves play the parts, occasionally with a rehearsal and a few props, more often using only their imaginations to direct them. For several years role-playing has been proving itself a surprisingly useful device to make a situation come alive for both the actors and those watching.

It makes an ideal springboard for any meeting, but its use need not be limited to this. At any time it can help members of a committee to anticipate how they, or those whom they are trying to portray, might feel in that situation. It can be used as a short-cut through tedious explanations of facts; it can serve to illuminate and throw new light on a problem in discussion. It can test a future situation or, even before discussion on a problem has begun, it can give a graphic picture of what that problem will be. In short, there are endless ways to adapt it to the problems of any group.

Why It Works

Role-playing is based on the old truth we have taken a long time to rediscover: if we are really to learn anything, we need to learn it from the inside out. We have to start at the emotional center. If the imagination is captured, the emotions are involved as well, and the result is that Mr. X,

for instance, actually feels as Mr. Y might feel. Mr. X has been told often enough, but just telling didn't do any more good than just telling usually does. If X takes the part of Y and tries to put himself in Y's size 10 and rather worn shoes, he begins to get a surprisingly new slant on a problem. And the audience shares that new feeling.

The basis of it all is that we love a play (or a novel) in which we can lose our own identity and become the hero or heroine. Even a bad play will find us biting our lips, sitting on the edge of our chairs, and so living through the situation being played before our eyes that we cry, or laugh, or ache to get up there on the stage and take over. In fact, we pay anywhere up to $7.80 for the privilege.

Curiously enough, the same magic works even when nothing whatsoever has been paid for seats. For example, we sat in the audience with perhaps forty young graduate students who were studying social service when role-playing was used as a training device. One of their members came up on a fake stage to interview an elderly pathetic woman (actually another social worker) who was trying to get advice as to what she should do when she was released from a sanitorium. It took over a half-hour for the young student to figure out a practical solution, and during that time the audience grew more and more tense. When at last she came up with a workable idea, the audience gave an audible sigh of relief and broke into applause.

How It Began

The idea of acting out a situation is probably as old as the first cave-man who dramatized that time he killed the out-size lion. Or as new as the latest parent who says to his child, "Now, this is what you do when you are introduced

to someone: just put out your hand—no, no, your right one, not your left. *This* is your right hand . . ."

But the credit for applying it to a totally different kind of situation belongs to a psychiatrist, J. L. Moreno. Back in the twenties in Vienna he tried the technique (in a form which he called Psychodrama) as a means of helping his patients back to mental health. He had no idea that it would prove even more useful to the well man. The sociologists and educators who got a good look at his method in action when he came to this country decided that it could be adapted to everyday problems.

Since then, the core of the method Moreno developed has been applied to an increasing number of situations, and has seldom failed to clarify them. During the war the Office of Strategic Services used the technique, among the other tests psychologists worked out, to judge applicants for particularly dangerous work. OSS found that how applicants looked and what they wrote on paper were not enough; these failed to give a clue to the real man. What was needed was a way to discover not only a man's breaking point, but whether he was a leader or follower, how he would act in situations demanding tact, quick thinking, or forcefulness; whether he could take a hard blow, not only physically but socially. Truths such as these, deep and often hidden are hard to come by. In less than a week, using "situation tests" in which the candidate had to play certain roles, the examiners were able to decide whom to accept or reject. Subsequent performance proved the virtue of the methods.

The Army is currently using role-playing, which it calls "exercises" or "hypothetical situations." Vocational guidance centers use it to anticipate future problems; factories and businesses to improve employer-employee relations; teachers

to help make clear a subject; and, as we have seen, schools use it to train graduate students. There are many other instances, but the important point here is to show how it may be used for meetings, small or large.

How You Can Use Role-Playing

There are two kinds of role-playing: the prearranged skit and the one that evolves, spontaneously and naturally, out of the course of a discussion and has not been arranged in advance. Either is helpful in solving the particular problem for which it is geared.

The prearranged skit is a valuable short-cut. It can be used to brief an audience on information they need to have, and to dramatize a situation which the audience will later analyze and discuss. It presents a situation so much more vividly and appealingly than a speech could do that it fixes that situation in the audience's mind. It's there. What's more, the participants remember it and build on it. What is still more, those watching the skit share in it emotionally. Consequently they leave the meeting far more ready to carry out the group's purposes. Besides conveying information with a real impact, role-playing can create understanding and produce a higher percentage of resultant action. In any money-raising campaign or, indeed, in any meetings whose purpose is action and persuasion, it is a superb technique.

For example, a group which was working to persuade citizens to vote for the county-management form of government sponsored a meeting. All who were there, perhaps fifty or more people, had been asked to function as a kind of speakers' bureau: to talk later to citizens' associations and

groups of all kinds. Most of them were willing to help but unprepared and uncertain.

After a few points of order the chairman explained that several on the committee were going to put on a skit representing the kind of situation that would face the members of the audience when, later, they went out to address meetings. The actors would try to demonstrate first the type of speeches to be given, then the reactions and questions which were likely to follow.

Around a table at the front of the room, the committee began the skit with explanatory speeches from two members. Then the others asked questions. For example: "You said that a county manager could save this county . . . dollars. Now, I'd like to know where you got those figures." And, "How do we know we'll get a good county manager? Why won't he just be a political appointee?"

And so on, one belligerent, another pleasant, another a heckler, and still another the typical apple-polisher, without whom no meeting is complete and who often can make an audience turn around and go in an opposite direction.

"Wel-l-l now," said this actor, clearly relishing his part, "I just want to say I think maybe we're being a little hasty here tonight." He took off his glasses, polished them slowly, and smiled out over the audience. "I think we may be being a little unfair to those fine men who've been takin' care of our county here now for a good many years. Maybe they could of done a better job; I won't say they couldn't. But they're just folks, like the rest of us, and like this manager you're talkin' about puttin' in. I've lived around these parts for longer than I'd care to say, and we've been gettin' along all right. Our children have had a mighty fine education,

better than most of us had, I dare say . . ." And so on.

At some point the questions being put on the mock stage shifted into free-for-all questioning from the audience, and by the time the meeting broke up, everyone there had had a better briefing in county government, pro and con, than hours of explanatory speeches could have done.

This kind of skit, like any type of role-playing, needs little prearranging. In no sense is it putting on a real play with rehearsals, props, and written lines.

Actually the role-played situation, even of this prearranged kind, has most spontaneity and reality if little more than the situation and the various characters the actors will play are decided on before the meeting. In the county-management skit, for instance, one character had to know that he would be the typical fact-finder, another the type who insists on knowing what would happen if . . . , and the third, of course, that he should clothe his opposition in the guise of a seasoned, genial mediator.

Too much coaching or rehearsing is likely to deaden the performance. Meet once, figure out what the core of the problem is and what you want to get across to the audience. Then decide which characters will best dramatize that problem or issue, try a quick test-run to get the feel of it, and let it go at that.

If you explain to the audience, at the meeting, that this is an almost spontaneous affair, they will like it the more on that account. And you can almost always count on the player's imagination to persuade him to do his best in the role, once it is given him.

So, use the prearranged skit to convey information; to present a situation for later analysis; to involve a group of

people in a project and stir them to greater conviction and action.[1]

Spontaneous Role-Playing

This kind of role-playing (sometimes called reality-testing or socio-drama) is like the prearranged skit in that the players share others' feelings and the members of the audience share some of its results. But it differs in purpose in that it happens on the spot; it is not prearranged or prerehearsed. It grows out of the occurrence within the group of some kind of situation that can be better understood if it is acted out.

Even the freest discussion cannot bring out every angle of a problem. The most farsighted committee members cannot always anticipate how other people are going to feel as a result of a committee decision. The most productive group runs into difficulties; one member feels his arguments unfairly ignored; another consistently fails to make any contribution. Or a group may feel almost certain that it is deciding rightly, but there may be a lingering doubt in the minds of some, if not all.

In any of these situations, and in others, the group can make giant strides toward solving the problem by letting a

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[1] For example, role-playing was used to explain and convince a PTA meeting of about seven hundred people that the schools needed better sex education. First, a scene was enacted in which questions on sex were badly handled. Second, a scene showed the wise handling of the questions through the schools. Next was a scene involving a large number of actors who discussed the problem at a simulated PTA meeting. Last, a film was shown which, in the sense that the audience became imaginatively involved in the course of its story, had some of the effect of role-playing in itself. A point specifically mentioned as a successful by-product of the role-playing was that a great many people necessarily had to act in the scene which portrayed a PTA meeting. Acting the parts in itself served to persuade the participants.

few members volunteer to act it out. The term "reality-testing" means just that. They are testing how people feel, or would feel, by pretending they are those people, faced with that situation. Curiously, they may find, as they imagine themselves into that part, that they are feeling differently from what they had expected. As X found his emotions different when he thought himself into Y's shoes, so do both the group members acting and those watching.

Role-playing is a way to explore the emotions of others; by semi-experiencing a situation, the actors are able to perceive and feel it more completely. They can draw a much deeper and more valid understanding of what forces and what factors may be involved in the problem. Since the reality they are testing is not the eventual reality, and the parts they are playing are not for keeps, they feel a real willingness to play them—once they have been introduced to the technique. But more of this later.

Here is a listing of the various uses of this kind of role-playing, resulting from moments at which some member, or several, of a group could well say, "Let's role-play it," or, "Let's role-play it at the next meeting and find out." [2]

1. For testing ahead of time how a group decision might result.
2. To prepare to meet a future situation.
3. To let some disagreeing or irritated group member get his grievance off his chest (or understood, as well).
4. To get a better understanding of the point of view of others.

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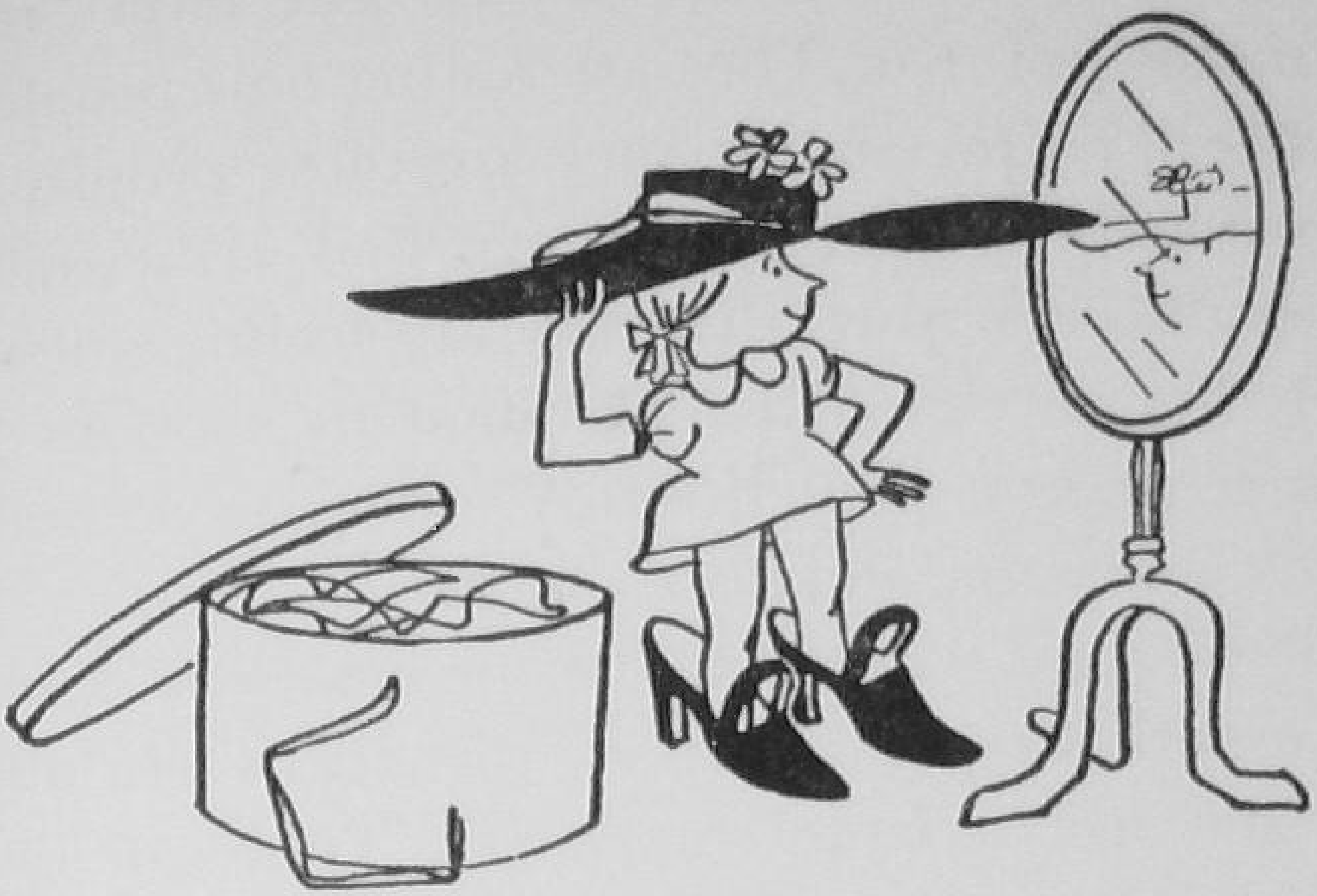
[2] We are indebted for the itemizing of these instances to a clinic group at the 1948 National Training Laboratory in Group Development, Bethel, Maine.



Prepare to meet a future situation

5. To develop special skills on the part of a group member or to develop understanding of group situations.
6. To present various courses of action (for decision).

But since role-playing as a method of solving problems is so unfamiliar to most group members, a listing of the occasions for its use is perhaps not enough. It is not possible in so short a book to give examples for every one in that list; but specific instances may be suggestive enough to persuade a leader or group member to ask: Could we solve this problem by role-playing? Would role-playing be a way out of our impasse? Would we be on surer ground if we role-played the effect of our decision?

To Test Emotional Response

A workshop was held to study relationships between pupils and teachers. Toward the end of the session the delegates felt that they had reached conclusions which would improve the teaching habits at their various schools. But how

were they going to go back home and justify those changes to their fellow faculty members? How were they going to persuade them to make the change? Would their colleagues listen to the reports with open minds? Or would they resent those enthusiastic recommendations?

Someone said, "Why don't we role-play it? Why doesn't Miss Garnsay," who had brought up the question of how the reports would be received, "play herself, addressing her own faculty, and see how it comes out?"

Miss Garnsay played herself without any hesitation. She thought it would be easy. Several others played the faculty, who were being "told."

The faculty met. They conducted usual business. Then Miss Garnsay got up, commented that "I think you will all be interested in hearing about the recent workshop at——, the decisions we reached and the new systems we think all of you will want to use here as a result."

She went happily into her speech, but the "faculty" was not happy. As she gave them the facts they found they definitely resented her attitude. Why should she assume they would like to turn the whole system upside down just because she had gone to a workshop? To her astonishment (and, when they got around to thinking about it later, to theirs), the members of the group who were playing the faculty were angry.

"You didn't even ask us if we wanted to hear your report . . ."

"You just walk in here and upset the whole handling of my classes without any understanding of what my problems are . . ."

"What you say may be all very well for some high schools,

but it will never work in mine. I would rather resign than try to . . ."

Needless to say, the group then got down to figuring out an acceptable way to present the decisions of the workshop to their local faculties, knowing the results of the several-day session would be almost wasted unless they could interest, involve, and persuade the teachers at home to carry out what the few had learned. They role-played several methods until they found one that had positive rather than negative results.

To Test the Response to a Decision

A group of foremen in a factory used role-playing to help them out of a particularly difficult situation with the men under them. It was necessary that the men wear safety devices which they hated and found excuses to avoid. How could the foremen present the problem in a convincing way? How could they anticipate the men's attitude enough to be convincing? Role-playing gave the answer.

In another instance, a committee planning training for groups of volunteer workers reached, on paper and through discussion, what it considered a good decision. It involved a lengthy annual report that they wished those volunteer leaders to fill out. Would they do it?

"As I look back on being such a leader," one member put in, "I can say that I think the thought of another report would infuriate me. You people haven't the faintest idea how much work goes into that job anyway—not only work, but money and gasoline and telephone bills and all the rest. Those leaders haven't time, I tell you. They won't take it."

"No," said another, "I think they will appreciate it. After all, it's for their own good. They'll be forced to look back over what they've done. It will help them to see their own mistakes."

"Nobody ever likes anything that's for his own good . . ."

They role-played it and were convinced that the ex-leader was right. They not only changed the report form, but in a very short time set it up in a way that would enable the leaders to supply the needed answers and facts quite simply.

This last episode is typical of the use of role-playing not only to test a future response to a decision, but to test the decision itself. Or, more properly, as a way out of those deadlocks that may occur in a group discussion when neither side can accept the other's viewpoint. To test which decision would be right, role-play it both ways. Is your feeling, your response, better when this happens, or when it is done that way?

Helping in a Group Problem

A large conference was held on welfare problems. In one of the small groups meeting to work on a section of the larger issue, there was one member who tried, again and again, to get her points across. Each time she failed to persuade the others, who turned their attention to the words of a more dominating member.

At last she grew angry and burst into the talk with, "I feel I'm being discriminated against in this group. I've been treated unfairly since the beginning of our meetings. If this conference is to work on our problems, I'd like this to be a problem. I'd like you to take the way you're discriminating against me as a problem!"

Suddenly aware, for the first time, of how she felt, they

did take her feeling as a problem; they role-played the preceding discussion with the two key figures playing each other. As a result, the play of personal forces in the whole group shifted. The role-playing in this instance accomplished three things: it let the frustrated member realize the dominator had meant nothing personal; it gave the too dominating member a new insight into what she was doing; it gave the whole group a feeling of drawing together, of patience, sympathy, and understanding. They became a more cohesive whole as a consequence.

When to Role-Play

Groups which are used to role-playing come to recognize, almost automatically, those moments when its use is indicated; others learn very soon, by trying it. If a problem, a decision, a situation touches or will touch the feelings and emotions of people, role-playing will provide a better answer than discussion. How can you judge this, however, the first time?

Again we use the core of suggestions worked out by the National Training Laboratory clinic group.

1. The scene should reveal or deal with a valid problem in human relations.
2. The problem should be clear, single, and specific; it should never include related problems.
3. It should be one the group is capable of acting out; i.e., one in which the players can understand how the characters might feel.
4. It must mean something not only to the people who are doing the role-playing, but to the people who are watching it. It should, if possible, mean approximately the same thing to all of them.

How to Go about Role-Playing

Introducing Role-Playing

There is bound to be a certain resistance on the part of one, or several, members to a device that is completely unfamiliar. Until they try it, they may think it childish, or feel self-conscious at the thought of playing a part. These and other reactions can be anticipated. Tackled head-on, they are only strengthened, so take it slowly. At some meeting, when its possible use is not likely, it can be described as a technique the group may eventually find helpful. If possible, a few members (primed ahead of time) may play out something simple and objective that can in no way disturb anyone present.

Warming-Up Session

On the first occasion when role-playing seems the solution to a problem, a special warming-up session (the playing out of a fairly meaningless episode) may help to melt the self-consciousness of the group. But on succeeding occasions the warm-up need be no more than the necessary discussion of the situation—where it is, what the occasion, what kind of person each character is.

After a group has learned to use role-playing, trying a preliminary episode is not only unnecessary but may even be harmful. For when a group is deeply involved in thrashing out a problem, a warming-up scene may take the edge off playing the real one. Role-playing should be a striking-while-the-iron-is-hot proposition to achieve what it's after.

Setting It Up

Props: Clear one end of a room, shove the table around and push away the blackboard, place needed chairs, and give one actor something to read if his part indicates that. But don't go any farther. The more fuss, the less spontaneous the whole scene will be.

Casting the characters: At this point, the leader needs to be sensitive to the strengths and weaknesses of the people within the group. Asking for volunteers is the best, but even the volunteers may, that first time, miscast themselves. It is vitally important that no too vulnerable member—the timid one, the easily hurt one, the inarticulate one, etc.—be allowed to play a part in which those sore spots in his personality will be revealed for all to see. Nor should anyone who already feels unpopular with the group, rightly or wrongly, be allowed to play someone unpopular. Cast the characters that first time—indeed, the first few times—in such a way that someone whose importance and liking are unquestioned in the group will play the unappealing role.

For the other roles it is well to let people play familiar parts the first time, parts which are so automatic as to be almost second nature. Then, as the group repeats the same scene immediately after, as they usually want to do, have the members take different roles. Later, when used to role-playing, people are much better able to assume parts quite opposite to themselves.

Similarly, as a group grows accustomed to the device (and to one another), members can choose to play those parts which they feel will help them the most. In fact, once the original shyness wears off, resistance does too, and people

are able to play any number of parts they never expected they could.

Character Descriptions: Obviously X would get very little good out of playing Y unless he had some notion ahead of time of what Mr. Y is like. For example, here are clues given to several men who put on a role-playing demonstration in the Army:

> ". . . a very conscientious man who is scared to death of doing anything irregular."
>
> ". . . man who hates his superior and whose superior hates him. His transfer papers are in so he doesn't feel any need to pull his punches."
>
> ". . . man who loves to pitch headlong into large production problems. Happiest when involved in the hurly-burly of getting out a lot of work. Home situation is unhappy and he likes to put in overtime."

The actors must have a mental picture ahead of time, even though it is only the briefest sketch. Very little is needed to remind them of people they know who share those characteristics. They try to think how those people would feel and act. From then on the imagination is quite competent to take over on its own.

Involving the audience: If role-playing a situation follows directly on discussion and argument about that situation, the members of the audience seldom need to be told to identify themselves with the characters. Indeed, they often feel so strongly about their own angle on this problem that they cease being objective. Like the audience at a high-school baseball game, they care only about their team; the other team is the enemy and its plays (or points of view) are discounted or ignored. This state of enthusiastic participa-

tion, or identification, though exciting, hardly makes for any sympathy with another viewpoint.

Hence a word to those who are going to watch role-playing is good. Ask them, if they are violently opposed, to try to feel themselves into the part of their opponent in the argument. Use the put-yourself-in-their-place technique. Try to get them to spread their sense of identification beyond those playing their point of view, or they will get no emotional understanding and be no nearer a solution when the role-playing is finished.

Another device to involve the audience is to ask one or two to watch for specific reactions or ideas. Or ask the group to sort out the various angles of the problem and agree to watch for revealing behavior in relation to them. What do they think (making notes at the time, if they like) of what A feels? Is it warranted? Is it the way any of them might feel? How would they feel if they were A, or B, or C? Why are A and B and C behaving the way they are, anyway? Why are they, the audience, feeling as they do while they watch? If a solution seems to emerge inevitably from playing out the situation, is it really inevitable? Does it seem the right one, at last?

Cutting It Off

It takes a considerable measure of experience to know just when to cut off the action, to realize that the high point has been reached and what would follow would be on the downgrade, both in content and in feeling. Most novices at role-playing let it go on too long. It is an effective device regardless, but it is more so if it is cut at the peak, when either the solution or the emotional profiles are sharply de-

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
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Knowing when to cut off the action

fined. There is little help we can give on this, since the skill of knowing when to end—in a book, or play, or when the guests hover in the front doorway—is never easily come by.

The best we can do is this: keep aware of the specific purpose of this particular bit of role-playing. Cut it off as soon as it either provides the information, skill, or understanding the group is after—or seems sure not to provide it.

Evaluate and Play It Again

Once the scene has been cut off, the leader asks the players how they felt as they were acting their parts and then turn the question to the audience.[3] Needless to say, this im-

[3] For getting the reaction of a large audience, see Chapter XIII, *The Large Meeting.*

mediate talking-it-over session is essential to clinching the reactions experienced and solving the problem which occasioned the role-playing.

How did the members who took part feel when such and such a thing happened, or was said? Were all the members satisfied with the action they just watched? Would they have interpreted the character or point differently from the way A did? Do they feel B picked up all the important points? Was there an obvious angle overlooked? What would happen if that angle had been picked up and the players had carried on from there? Did a completely new problem arise out of playing that scene?

These, or any number of other questions, may emerge, and the best way to answer them is to play the scene again with the roles exchanged or with different members playing them. From the various actions and responses to the roles the group can test its convictions or arrive at new ones. Obscure forces and factors become clear, and, in a measure, all experience the situation and are able to understand it more completely.

This use of role-playing is, in a small way, the same kind of thing the Armed Forces do in a large way when they have a war game. They create a hypothetical situation in which two armies or fleets are to fight in certain areas. Some factors are stated and others are left unknown. At the planned moment the two forces begin acting out the problem. Observers watch at strategic points to see what techniques and stratagems are used, how successful they are, and decide what others might be more so.

Pitfalls

Role-playing can be absorbing. It is usually far more fun and more engrossing than just sitting in a chair and discuss-

ing. The obvious but important warning, then, is that it should not be used just for the sake of ending boredom, or to show off a new trick; its use should be restricted to problems or situations that warrant it.

Nor should it ever be used in an instance when it will play upon a really serious emotional illness on the part of a member. Illness of that sort is in a psychiatrist's bailiwick, not in a discussion group's. It's up to the leader to recognize this, whether role-playing is new to him or not, and steer away from deep-seated difficulties. Once the group has done a few sessions it will realize for itself what kind of magic shift in emotions will take place, and that role-playing is not just a trick or an excuse for getting up and moving around.

XII

LEADING A ONE-MEETING GROUP

IF A GROUP is called together for one meeting only, how much use can it make of these methods? How far can the leader go in helping it to have discussion on a free basis?

Perhaps a difficulty has suddenly arisen in an office and Mr. Jones gets a telephone call from his superior, asking him to call various people together to decide what to do about it. Or a problem has come up in the Community Chest office which requires an immediate decision from certain key figures in the community at once. One meeting will suffice in either case. Can these new methods help at that meeting?

The answer depends somewhat on the experience of the members, but far more on the conviction and skill of Mr. Jones. Let us assume this kind of meeting is new to the members but that the leader has been working regularly with a small group that has been using these techniques. He knows the change in participation and the results that can follow when the members feel free to contribute and reach a solution through agreement rather than by voting. He knows what can be done by way of really shared production—if there is a series of meetings.

But he does not have several meetings. He has only one, made up of members who are used to a traditional, chairman-controlled session. What does he do?

He makes a choice, of course, and in making it he may find the chart on page 113 useful. On it he sees (to bolster his own

experience and conviction) that group production increases as the leader lessens his control. He would like to function as a stimulator, to permit production to reach the highest point, but in one meeting that is out of the question. He has to be content with the middle course, in which production will rise from mere support of his opinions to some real participation—if he is capable of helping it do so.

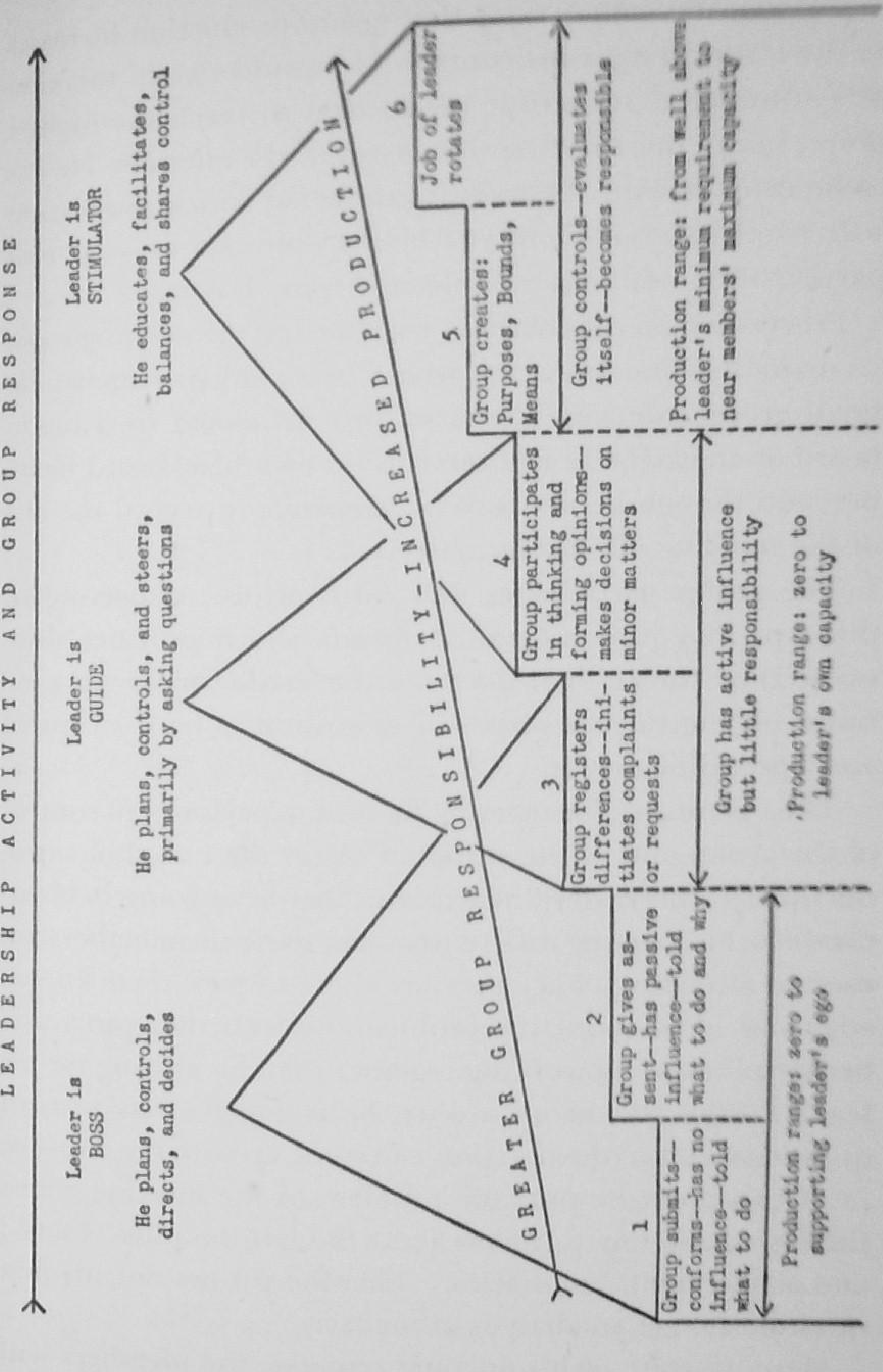
Proceeding on that halfway basis, he has the meeting room set up in the same way that it would be for any free-discussion, small group meeting: chairs set in a U, closed by a blackboard or an easel. He will serve as his own blackboard member, and though he needs to ask someone to record the gist of the meeting, he has no observer.

The group participates, but he controls. A meeting of this type may have a detailed agenda which provides automatic time limits. If it does not, he may want to set time limits on the various phases of discussion as both a control and a prodding device.

The opening of the meeting finds him, perforce, in control of the group and of the situation. After the round of introductions (if necessary), he explains that he is going to try to conduct this meeting differently from those the members are used to attending. Since they are there to pool their knowledge and ideas about the problem, he feels they can reach better solutions by working together than by waiting for his lead. To the best of his ability, he is going to try to turn questions back to them so they can come up with the answers.

At this point he puts the problem of the meeting across the top of the board. Below it, at the left, he puts "Facts"; and at the right, "Obstacles." Then he throws out his first questions to get an analysis of the facts.

Here, in spite of his opening remarks, the members will


LEADERSHIP ACTIVITY AND GROUP RESPONSE
Leader is BOSS
He plans, controls, directs, and decides
Leader is GUIDE
He plans, controls, and steers, primarily by asking questions
Leader is STIMULATOR
He educates, facilitates, balances, and shares control
GREATER GROUP RESPONSIBILITY-INCREASED PRODUCTION
1
Group submits--conforms--has no influence--told what to do
2
Group gives assent--has passive influence--told what to do and why
3
Group registers differences--initiates complaints or requests
4
Group participates in thinking and forming opinions--makes decisions on minor matters
5
Group creates: Purposes, Bounds, Means
6
Job of leader rotates
Production range: zero to supporting leader's ego
Group has active influence but little responsibility
Production range: zero to leader's own capacity
Group controls--evaluates itself--becomes responsible
Production range: from well above leader's minimum requirement to near members' maximum capacity

probably try to make an expert as well as a leader out of him. If he knows the subject and has definite opinions about it, he may have difficulty in resisting the temptation to answer. His solution is to keep that impulse under control and toss the question back to the group for clarification, "So I can get it down on the board." After two or three attempts, the members will realize that he really means he will not answer questions.

When he comes to the next stage, listing obstacles, he finds less trouble both in obtaining ideas and in keeping the group on the subject. The members are likely to have a genuine interest—for the moment at least.

But don't expect that happy cooperation to last. One member or another gets carried away with his own angle on the problem and wants to monopolize the discussion. Another wanders off the subject, and the leader longs for some display of member responsibility or for a leadership team to rescue him. Since he has neither, he looks at his watch, determines how far the group has gone in its discussion and whether he dares let the difficulty continue. For he alone is responsible for the group's progress and he knows the members will expect him to shape its course even though he is using a questioning technique.

Unless he is highly skilled in that technique, he will probably have to step in and exert his authority as leader to get the discussion back on a productive track. In addition, he will probably have to address specific questions to specific individuals, much as he would prefer not to. In each instance he has to gauge the extent to which he uses these dominating techniques, and let his performance depend on the situation he faces. The necessary ground must be covered even though

use of less group participation results in fewer valuable solutions.

Again, the requirements of time and the receptivity of the group dictate whether he can ask the members to fill out a post-meeting reaction sheet and have an evaluation period. If at all possible, these are valuable to the leader as a check on his activity and to the members as a clue to how other meetings they attend might be made more productive.

XIII

THE LARGE MEETING

OUR definition of a large meeting, as opposed to a conference, is this: it is limited to one session, held in one room.

Also by our definition, at least fifty per cent of all large meetings are bores. Or perhaps we might better say that fifty per cent of the audience is bored. In chairs constructed with a T-square in mind, they have to sit still, whether they like it or not. The air is bad; from the platform come words which they cannot refute, and a large proportion of the listeners spend the never-ending minutes trying to keep the lids from closing entirely over their eyes. They may be able to get in a question or two at the end, but even this single spasm of their mental muscles is usually denied them. Someone else is always quicker to get to his feet or wave his hand. In no time the chairman says firmly, "I'm afraid we have time for just one more question; our speaker has to make a train . . ."

There is no recourse for this fifty per cent of the audience except to stay away from large meetings. They stay away. You stay away and so do we. The wonder is that the other fifty per cent turns up.

Yet they do turn up—not only willingly but, if we are to judge from the regular meeting-goers, gladly. They sit in a state of receptive vacuity, extracting those nuggets from the speech with which they agree, rejecting the others. Once

outside, they usually forget all about it—and turn up at the next meeting. In between sessions, their habits and ideas remain, for the most part, the same.

What is to be done to bring back the bored half and awake the passive half, to make large meetings both creative and productive?

Let Them Participate

The key to success is to give the audience an active part in the proceedings; the way to do it is to break a large meeting into little meetings.

It makes no real difference whether the session has been called to instruct, persuade, or to reach decisions—the results will be multiplied in proportion to the share the audience has in the events of the meeting. People learn more quickly, in a way to make it stick, when they themselves have to meet the challenge of a problem. If it's put to them they figure out what to do about it, and do it. When facts or proposals or ideas are just handed out, their minds are barely stirred from their natural inertia.

Some years ago Kurt Lewin did a very simple experiment.[1] He tested the reactions of housewives to a lecture on changing their food habits and those of their families. Then he tested their reactions to a meeting in which they took an active part in the discussion and resulting decisions. They made very few changes as a result of the lecture; substantial ones after taking part in the meeting.

This experiment and others like it only serve, of course, to give a statistical edge to the acknowledged value of partici-

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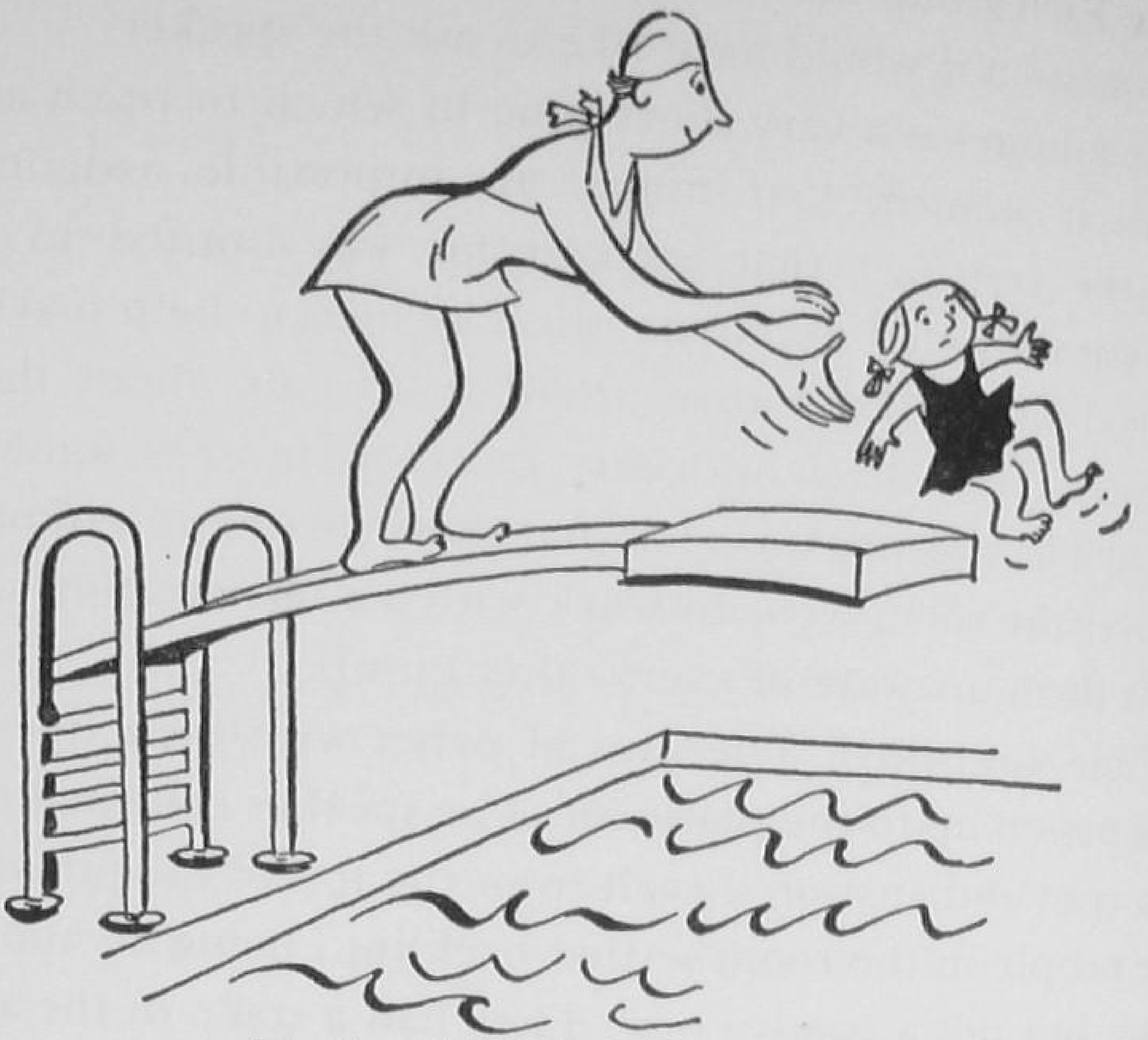
[1] Kurt Lewin, "Group Decision and Social Change," summarized in *Readings in Social Psychology*, edited by Newcomb and Hartley, pp. 331–44.



Meeting the challenge of a problem

pation—which can now be put into effect, even in a large meeting.

To Improve the Question Period After a Lecture

The practical method was first developed by J. Donald Phillips, head of Adult Education at Michigan State College. It is known either as "Phillips 66" or "buzz sessions"; meetings of up to two hundred and fifty people can use it in many different ways.

Perhaps two hundred people sat facing the stage of the auditorium at the first meeting in which we saw this method used. There was a lecture first, following which the chairman counted off the people sitting in odd-numbered rows into sets of three. He next asked each set to turn around, face the three immediately behind, and with them make up a group

of six. Each group was then given six minutes to decide what one question it would most like to ask the speaker.

Six minutes is a very short time in which to reach agreement; it seemed, that night, an impossible assignment. But the very fact that each group was limited in time and was restricted to one question seemed to help make the method work. (Of course, there is no rule about the six minutes; it can be ten or twenty, but there must be some time limit.) The urgency was such that those small knots of people all over the room went to work with a concentration which made them unaware of every other group.

Time was called. The slips of paper with their questions were passed up to the platform. The speaker collected them, then read and answered each from the top of the pile down. The people in the room settled back into being an audience again, but not a passive one. They had a stake in the action going on; no one knew which question would come first, and the sense of possession all human beings feel about something they have helped create took over.

In the traditional large meeting with a period for questions at the end, at least a third of them may be discounted. Again and again someone asks the speaker about a point which he answered at length on page three of his speech. Another uses questions as a vehicle to air his own point of view or grievance, or to show off his knowledge. Others ask various kinds of time-wasting questions familiar to every meeting-goer.

In the meeting that night the groups of six had cut out all of that. Every question was pertinent and interesting. A few overlapped but were not duplicates. Apparently, when six people have to agree on a question, someone among them will spot the meaningless one. They have a group pride in

making their question worth asking, and it almost invariably is.

Phillips 66 is simple to use. The essentials are:

1. Before the meeting explain to the speaker or panel members what the method is and what it accomplishes. Allow ample time for the questions.
2. Explain the method briefly to the audience before the question period begins.
3. Count off a row as a sample, to show them how to proceed.

Using the Method in Reverse

Recently we used Phillips 66 in reverse, to make the audience give the answers.

Forty-odd Army reserve officers attend a regular weekly training meeting. They all served as personnel officers in World War II and their training is aimed at keeping them ready to be called on again. The weekly meetings provide a refresher course to keep them in touch with any new developments in their field. The meeting that night was on the subject of good business management. They expected, as usual, to have a lecture.

Instead of lecturing, we adapted the buzz session to our needs and split the large meeting into eight little ones.

After a brief explanation of what was to follow and why, the large blackboards which stood on the platform were reversed. On them—with enough black space between points so that they could be read easily—was written a list of eight "Major Elements of Good Business Management." Each group was assigned one element and given fifteen minutes to figure out and list ways in which a personnel office could further it.

The room immediately took on the look and sound of a workshop. At the end of the time, each group reported verbally and its findings went on the blackboard. One had listed several ways of contributing; another only one, but it had been so carefully thought through that the how-to-make-it-work aspect was implicit in it. The other reports fell between these two, but each made a contribution. Discussion, of course, followed.

Altogether, the evening gave a practical demonstration of how in a very short time the experience and knowledge of a group can be focused and made the basis for further activity. Through their own necessarily concentrated thinking, the reserve officers told themselves more about their responsibilities than any speaker could possibly have done. Even more important, they had grasped something of the general management viewpoint and helped prepare themselves for an intelligent part in it. Had they just listened, writing down points A, B, C, in their notebooks, the information would have remained unabsorbed and to an extent unrealized, because they would have had only a passive connection with it.

Far afield from the Army and problems of management was another use of Phillips 66 to put an audience to work. This time it was at a Writers' Conference in Montana. An expert in the technique of the short story gave her lecture and then divided her listeners into small groups. To each she gave a basic situation, the start of a plot and twenty minutes in which to produce the shape of the whole story. "You," she said to one group, "work out the rest of the plot if the woman does this." "And you"—to another—"figure out the line of the plot if she does that." And so on, until each group had a start, a direction, and a considerable job on its hands!

To Get Group Decisions

At the opening meeting of a large PTA, the program committee took time between the welcomes and the introduction of the teachers to find out what the parents would like to do in succeeding meetings. Entertainment? Lectures? Films? Discussions of common parent-children problems? Since problems seemed to bring the greatest evidence of interest, the audience was broken into groups of six to eight to decide which ones they thought the most pressing. Blackboards were brought in, the preference of each buzz group listed, and the audience then voted on the eight they preferred, to be taken up at the eight monthly meetings which could be given over to such subject matter.

Dr. Leland Bradford, of the National Education Association,[1] reports another instance in which buzz sessions were used to get a clear statement of feeling, this time from an entire high-school body. A group of the students had proposed the creation of a student organization, and the principal suggested that all students meet to discuss the proposal. It was also arranged that there would be a panel: one student from each grade, plus a teacher and a counselor. Each panel member was to interview five people before the assembly took place so that his comments would reflect their opinions.

After the preliminaries (including the playing of two recordings of anonymous interviews, one with a teacher and one with a student), the panel on the platform was interviewed by the senior class president. Then the audience was

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[1] Leland P. Bradford, "Leading the Large Meeting," *Adult Education Bulletin,* December 1949, reporting on a clinic at the 1949 Conference of the Department of Adult Education, National Education Association.

broken into small groups to decide two questions: How strongly did the students desire the organization? What were the first steps to take if they wished to form one?

Listening Teams and Phillips 66

An audience can be involved and put to work even before the question period at the end of a lecture. It can be formed into listening teams—a suggestion for which we are again indebted to Dr. Bradford.

Before the lecture begins, the chairman of the evening divides the audience into sections, each of which is to be responsible for listening to what the speaker says with a different question in mind. Here are four questions, for four sections, which Dr. Bradford suggests: Which of the speaker's ideas won't work for our community? (Or our organization?) What further ideas for attacking our problem do the speaker's statements suggest? What are the barriers we must reduce to carry out his suggestions successfully? What are the next steps we should take?

After the lecture, each team breaks into small buzz sections to discover the reactions of the members and report the important ones to the audience as a whole. (Obviously any number of questions and teams can be adapted to your needs.)

Dr. Bradford suggests still a further involvement of the audience in the form of an audience representation panel. Either the chairman chooses members from the audience at random to come to the platform and form a panel group; or each buzz group can nominate a representative to serve as a panel member. (If that makes too big a panel, choose from among the representatives by lot.)

An audience can be divided into teams for watching as

well as listening, so that each section concentrates on a specific problem or question. The entire audience sees the same documentary film or role-playing scene. Each section is instructed to follow through one angle and report on it. How can that angle be adapted to their group's needs? What is useful for its purposes? What would not work for its problem? When the scene playing before their eyes comes to an end, each team divides into small buzz groups which then come up with their various questions or problems.

There are, in fact, endless variations on the theme of Phillips 66. Vary it as you please, and as you need, remembering that for at least the portion of the large meeting in which it is used, you have automatically eliminated boredom in your audience.

XIV

THE WORKING CONFERENCE

LET US say at once that we realize planning any conference is work. The type we describe here has no monopoly on that job.

This is labeled a "working conference," however, because its outcome depends on the ideas, experience, and decisions of the delegates. It is different from the convention, from the kind of conference in which the delegates are an audience, listening to speaker after speaker. If the delegates run into the thousands, certain of these techniques can be adapted (Phillips 66 or the problem census, for instance), but any detailed suggestions for handling that large a conference lies outside the scope of this book.

When the National Nursing Council held its first major conference in many years, it arranged for its delegates to meet in three cities, for the purpose of holding working conferences. Nursing schools throughout the country had many problems, needs, ideas, and suggestions. It was not possible for one person to approach each of the 1245 state-accredited schools to learn these needs and ideas; nor, the Council felt, would a questionnaire fully bring them forth. Hence it was decided "that through the work conference method we could glean the best thinking on these problems and at long last meet the issues head on. . . . The main idea kept in mind was that the participants were invited to come from actual situations in the day-to-day job and were to give the director

of the study the best of their thinking. The participants were to say what they wished to say in relation to the nurse of the future and her preparation. . . . We were to provide the type of help requested. . . ." [1]

If the object in holding a conference is to pool information and thinking to the end of delegate-made decisions, then the working conference should come closest to answering those needs. It is based on this general pattern:

1. Delegates select the problems.
2. Decisions are made by delegates in small, face-to-face groups through free discussion.
3. Delegates meet periodically in general sessions to report decisions of small groups, make over-all decisions, and keep in touch with the work of all groups.
4. Experts (from within and without body of delegates) work right with groups and are available for panel discussions if necessary.

It would not be possible in one chapter to give more than a skeleton planning program. Not even a book could anticipate all the details, the hazards, the surprises, the irritations, the last-minute crises, the complaints—and the satisfactions—ahead. All we hope is to give you, the steering committee, as workable a guide as possible for planning a working conference.

Preliminary Activity

Delegates will be coming from ten, fifty, or a hundred groups located throughout a county, state, or the nation. They may be representing small business at a trade associa-

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[1] *A Thousand Think Together*, pp. 4, 177, published by National Nursing Council, 1948.

tion meeting, or chapters of a professional society. Perhaps they come from branch offices of a large corporation or from the locals of a trade union. They may be volunteer workers, or paid workers in a volunteer agency. Or they may represent only themselves—individual scientists or educators. Whatever the group, its members will probably be so widely dispersed that the steering committee can only find out what they want to discuss by mail.

After the first "feeler letter" to determine interest in a conference, another letter should go out, the returns from which will provide the cornerstone for building the whole conference. Since it belongs to the delegates, not to the planners, what do the delegates want to get from it? What are the problems they want to work on?

This basic letter must serve two purposes at once, plus a possible third:

1. To get a yes or no answer on probable attendance.
2. To provide a problem census on the basis of which the discussion groups will be formed.
3. (Possible) To get the names of the in-the-field delegates who, because they have had success in working out a particular problem, can be recruited to serve as experts.

The letter needs to emphasize the importance to those who are planning this conference of knowing which problems the delegates wish to discuss. Also, make it clear that all the mechanics of the conference depend on their stating their preference—as quickly as possible. It will probably help the delegates if they are given some possible problem areas (keeping them general rather than specific). Set up the letter so that they can check their preferences and urge them to write in any others they wish which are not listed.

If it seems advisable, ask each whether he has found a satisfactory way to solve a problem which he thinks others may find helpful (those potential experts). And last, this basic letter had probably better carry an explanation of what kind of conference this is going to be. It will not be the last time an explanation is necessary, but it should be the first.

No matter how carefully the letter is worded, the returns may be small and slow in coming in. Even so, base the preliminary conference plans on whatever returns do come. (After all, Gallup and Hooper get along with "random samples.") List discussion groups for each problem in which the delegates show significant interest—particularly for each batch of written-in problems which are closely related. If few of the returns show concern about problems which you, the steering committee or the high command, thought paramount, skip yours, not the delegates'. This is, remember, their conference.

At first glance it may seem impossible to set up enough groups, or delegates within each group, for each problem. But a second glance usually shows that several seemingly different definitions of a problem are, in essence, enough the same to justify putting them into one group. No two people see a problem from quite the same angle, as we have mentioned before, but the angles can be made to fit together well enough to make a whole.

Check the possible list of groups with the possible number of delegates. For the best discussion, a group should not include more than twelve or thirteen discussants, or less than five or six. With an observer and recorder, the range would be from seven or eight to fourteen or fifteen. Dividing the expected number of delegates by ten will give a rough index of

the number of groups for which to provide time, meeting places, and leadership teams.

If the number of desired subjects varies considerably from the number of expected groups at this point, don't worry about it. Think in terms of the maximum number of groups, and remember that when the conference starts, flexibility will be a cardinal virtue. At the last minute some too small groups may have to be combined with others or dissolved so their members can discuss more popular problems elsewhere. And some too large groups may have to be split. Just provide enough facilities and team members, and plan to take a sleeping pill the night before registration.

D-Day minus 90

It is now none too soon for the steering committee to split up into three subcommittees, since there is too much work ahead for one committee to cope with it all. Other subcommittees may also be important for you, but these three—to provide physical facilities, to provide experts, to provide and train leadership teams for the discussion groups—must function ahead of time to make this conference a success. These three subcommittees must work simultaneously.

Each subcommittee obviously has to start by answering certain basic questions:

1. What are our requirements?
2. How much can we spend?
3. What people (or facilities) are available within our limits of budget and requirements?
4. How do we go about getting the data we need on people? On places?

Poor physical facilities can ruin the best conference

Providing Physical Facilities

Since poor physical facilities and arrangements can ruin the most promising conference, here is a check list of the key items.

Small group meeting rooms:

- Well lighted and ventilated, free of outside noises
- Tables to provide U-shaped grouping with width no less than two-thirds of length
- Blackboard, four feet by eight feet, or larger, and easily reversible, placed so members' attention is away from source of outside light (or equivalent space provided by easels)
- Comfortable chairs
- Ash trays

Preparatory arrangements:

Identification cards if members do not know each other (or experts do not know them)

Arrangements at registration desk for registering members by discussion groups

Hand-outs giving members all information they need about conference arrangements, physical facilities, recreational facilities (if pertinent), and calendar of events

Mimeographing materials, arrangements for getting reports to delegates quickly, and if necessary a loud speaker

Post-meeting reaction sheets

Large meeting room:

Size adequate for expected group, but not over-large

Good visibility and acoustics

As little separation as feasible between platform and members, but an adequate area visible to all for role-playing demonstration if one is to be used

Maximum possible amount of blackboard space, distributed about the room so all members can read what is written

Providing Experts

At the usual conference, the speakers are almost the first and main consideration. Success or failure often depends on their drawing power.

At a working conference, what experts are there join the delegates in their discussions to supply special information when it is needed. They should also be available to take part in panel discussions, should these prove desirable.

This difference in function makes a difference in the steps taken by the committee to secure experts. Its job is not to find speakers, but to find people with appropriate information; if necessary, one for each group. The planners have to be guided not only by limitations of money, but by those set up by the pattern of this conference.

Big-name speakers (a tempting and automatic source of publicity) are not ruled out as experts—if you can afford them. But they may rule themselves out when they understand that they will not hold the platform, klieg-light position. Or they may be captivated and more than ordinarily interested by this approach, yet be unable to devote the time required to stay with a group throughout the conference. (In that case, take them for at least some of the small group discussion—not at the beginning, when the group is trying to get at the core of the problem, but in a later small meeting.) If the conference is a one-day affair, such experts are more likely to be able to meet with the groups, and the job of finding them is simplified.

On the other hand, if big-names don't mean much for your purposes, why not canvas the lists of delegates first? Check with the problem census returns and consider the occasional person who may have found a working solution to some of the problems (see problem census, page 128). Consider those the steering committee members know or know about.

The general field of the conference will necessarily determine the background the experts must have. Is it education? Religion? Community work? A specific science or industry? Labor relations? Union activity? Business management or governmental administration? Law? A charity? Poli-

tics? Or is it a field which from time to time reaches out into another field? In case the delegates cannot supply the information, what people in outside fields have the really constructive ideas your organization wants? Which are within reach, geographically and financially? Of those, which ones will be willing to work on a shoulder-to-shoulder basis with the group? Which would be willing to be on call, in case of a sudden need arising?

Whatever the choices, make sure that you help those experts by explaining ahead of time your needs (see Chapter X) and the—to them—unusual requirements of this conference. Then have a brief pre-conference session with the experts, perhaps during registration or lunch the first day, to explain again the roles they will play.

Providing Leadership Teams

Unlike the experts, the members of the leadership teams—leader, observer, recorder, and blackboard member—will not be determined by the nature of the discussion problems. Pick them from the members in sufficient number to equal the expected number of groups. Better still, more than equal. Provide extra members for the pre-conference training session, and a recorder for the large general meetings. Then, when the inevitable occurs and some have to drop out at the last minute, the substitutes have been trained and can step in.

Obviously those serving the groups in this leadership capacity should be intelligent, conscientious, and adaptable. They should also have enough self-confidence to be willing to tackle a new job. But the woods of any organization are full of people who feel they meet these qualifications—or

of loyal followers who will claim they do. How can the planners, at a distance, select the best?

The answer, of course, is that they can't. They have to go by the best advice they can get and count on the pre-conference training session to do the rest. Certain general qualifications may help:

Choosing leaders: Try to avoid those who like to dominate, be in the limelight, or who are in a position of power. It is difficult for any of these types to submerge their own personalities and they will probably wreck any hope of free discussion. Like the boss at staff meetings, they can't help but be treated with too much deference. If, for the sake of future peace and cooperation within the organization, these powerful members must be accepted in some position of importance, don't make them leaders. Give them conference jobs outside the discussion groups. If they must have positions within the group, make them experts, as the National Nursing Council did, by recruiting their leaders from the younger nurses among the membership. "This freed the directors of nursing schools to share their experience without seeming to direct the outcome of the group thinking. . . . It was hoped, also, that this young group would benefit from taking part in the activity and reflect this experience in the back-home situation." [2] In any case, try to scatter the important delegates throughout the groups, if their choice of problem permits it.

Choosing observers: The best observers are delegates who are enough interested in methods of group development so they

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[2] Ibid., p. 179.

do not too much mind staying out of the problem discussion. They also should be broad-gauged people who can steer clear of details and personalities.

Choosing recorders: This is a less rewarding job in itself than any of the others on the leadership team, since it usually keeps the member completely out of both discussion and evaluation. If any funds can be devoted to these activities, it's a good idea to pay stenographers or steno-typists so that delegates will not have to perform that chore.

On the other hand, to take stenographic notes of the first stages in a discussion group might be sheer waste of money. It takes time for a group to get into the swing of discussion and to get "on the beam." It might be good practice (and more economical) to let a member take these notes for the first session of the small group and have a stenographer report after the first break.

Choosing Blackboard Members: The discussion will benefit, of course, if this member is someone who can separate the significant points from the minor ones in a discussion. Long-distance guessing on this is hopeless. As with the other team members, you have to base your choice on what you can pick up from local sources—and pin your hopes on the pre-conference training sessions for the leadership teams.

In general, if there are delegates who have already served successfully as leadership team members, should they be used? Probably not, if there are enough likely new candidates. There are several reasons for this. The more members who get a little training and experience in these jobs, the better. Experienced people will be especially valuable as regular

group members and a superb reserve for leadership teams in emergencies. Keep them in reserve, but be sure to tell them why they have not been picked and ask them to be ready to step in as replacements.

When you have picked the members you would like to have on your leadership teams, send each a letter. Explain the functions of the team and its members. Ask each to serve in a specific capacity. Tell them also that the job will require their coming a day ahead of the conference for a training session. You cannot emphasize too much the importance of their being at that session.

The chance of discussion groups being wrecked by untrained leadership teams is very high. If some do not turn up for the training session, use your reserve line-up of members with experience, rather than take the chance of wrecking your conference. The most serious chance of failure in this type of conference comes from skimping on the training of leadership teams. The steering committee should not be afraid to take the time to train team members.

D-Day minus 30

Send out any source material you wish delegates to have as background for discussion, and make your plans for training leadership teams.

Training Leadership Teams

Teams for a large conference have been trained in one evening, but the team members are usually the first to realize that they should have had more time. Once the conference starts, the weakness becomes apparent even to the delegates.

It takes many regular meetings for a small group to grow together and work productively. Obviously the small groups which function in a conference cannot reach that stage in one, two, or even three days. But they can accomplish minor miracles if those in the key positions in each group—the leader, observer, blackboard member, and recorder—have had a day of intensive training before they meet with the group. The main requirement for leadership team members (after learning what their functions are) is practice, and a lot of it. Without it, they give the groups they lead only a fraction of the help they might.

In Appendix II we suggest a training plan which consists of a series of very short meetings held in one large room and several small ones. Some of these are practice sessions in which three leadership teams comprise a working unit. Each team in turn leads a brief meeting, with the other teams serving as the remaining members of the group. This gives all the teams trial runs and a chance to profit by watching other team members doing the same thing. Then together they all evaluate what they have done. With this experience behind them, the teams have a real feeling of security in the conference proper and can help their groups produce valuable results.

Recruiting a Training Staff

Like any other training session, this one requires a staff and someone in charge, a leader who knows these methods of group development and has had experience with them.

The leader, in turn, needs experienced people to help him with the separate teams, so that as the groups go off to separate rooms each has a trained person who can help, suggest, criti-

cize, and answer all the questions bound to come up. These trainers need not have had experience in training for a conference, but they should have served sufficiently on the leadership teams of small groups to know both the techniques and the attitude necessary.

Where are you going to get these people to do the training?

Of course the preferred source is within your own organization—and it is a very likely source. The methods we have been describing in this book may be new to you, hence you may not realize how widely they are being used or how unnew they may be to your delegates. So check throughout your own organization first.

Then inquire outside your organization. The leader and his staff of trainers do not need to know about the problems of your organization for this purpose; what they need to know is how leadership teams function. If, on inquiry, you fail to turn up people with this experience—and the skill of translating this experience to others—write to the Research Center for Group Dynamics, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan; or the National Education Association, Washington, D.C. Either can help you locate training staffs in your vicinity.

Several hundred people, from all parts of the country, have received this training at the National Training Laboratory and many of them have trained others. Thoroughly adequate people should be available in or near your city, whether you have heard of them or not. Most of them use their training on their jobs and do not make a profession of it. If there is some expense attached to bringing them from another city for the one-day training session, it will be far less than you would pay for big-name speakers.

D-Day

The time at this kind of work conference needs to be divided between general sessions and small face-to-face working discussion groups. Lunch and/or dinner can be used to give interim reporting or to highlight important points. The final session needs to be reserved for summarizing and general evaluation.

A Sample Timetable

As an example of what can be done in even part of a day, here is the over-all plan used by a county-wide PTA for a conference of the officers and committee chairmen of the local PTAs. This timetable can easily be used as is, or adjusted to special needs of a longer conference.

1:30 to 2:00	Registration
2:00 to 3:00	Opening general assembly: greetings by the president; demonstration of group discussion; explanation of new method; role-playing a bad and a good meeting
3:00 to 6:00	Small group meetings on problems selected by participants, with each group evaluating its own group process
6:00 to 6:30	Recess
6:30 to 7:30	Dinner
7:30 to 8:00	Report on highlights of afternoon meetings
8:00 to 9:30	Continuation of same discussion groups, but with emphasis in each

group on what the group is to do about carrying out the decisions made during the afternoon

9:30 to 10:30 Closing general assembly: final reports from the discussion groups; general evaluation of the conference; conclusions

Registration

This migraine-headache chore we mention not because the social scientists have discovered any way to simplify it, but because it is an occasion which can be used for other purposes as well.

For example, here is the way it was used by the county-wide PTA Institute to which we have just referred and will again frequently. In the first place, as the delegates walked up the broad steps of the entrance hall, they were met by an enormous poster which listed the problems to be discussed. Each problem, worded as a question, had a number before it, and each of the hundred and thirty-five delegates either confirmed his previous choice of problem, by number, or chose one. This was necessary because, though letters had been previously sent out as a problem census, this was not a closed conference. People came who had not registered ahead of time. They, too, needed to choose which problem they wanted most to discuss. Another chart listed the room number for each discussion-group number.

Second, the delegates were given a calendar of the day's events. This was in no sense the usual agenda. It was rather a combination of schedule and program and included reference material (names, a map of the county, etc.) which they might find useful.

Last, this registration corridor provided the most eye-catching time and place to exhibit material which even at a working conference may be important for the delegates to have.

The Kick-Off Session

This conference started, as any presumably must, with a speech of welcome by the president. However, he kept it short, and kept equally short his explanation of how the sessions would proceed: with work and real participation by all members.

It would seem that by this time there had been more than enough of explanation; nevertheless it must be done again. To quote from *A Thousand Think Together* (p. 187): "The plans and objectives should be *told* to those who have not read or understood the written communications or the pre-conference material discussed from a different approach in the training period for the service personnel, and explained again to the whole conference." And to prove their point they quote a delegate's reaction, even after this procedure: "I think many of the participants were a little taken aback by the amount of individual participation expected!"

The president ended his introduction with the fact that a short skit would follow to illustrate his words, then left the front of the room. Eight members of the planning committee brought their chairs to the front, arranged them in rows, and played a typical committee meeting. At their head was the chairman, familiar to all of us, full of little jokes at the start and a dictator thereafter—the kind who can spot a maverick and rule him out of order almost before he gets to his feet.

There was the timid member, too frightened to speak,

and the less timid who began but was promptly outvoiced by another, who kept coming in at intervals, like a Greek chorus, insisting on his point ("Everything depends on better equipment in the cafeteria!") And the conscientious objector, and the one who whispers her ideas behind her hand to her nearest neighbor but wouldn't think of saying them aloud.

A commentator stood at one side, explaining the bad points—quite unnecessary, as it happened, and hardly to be heard over the laughter. Then the chairs were rearranged and the same subject was handled with all members participating, a decision reached, and the techniques of the leadership team played out for all the delegates to see and understand.

The first skit took ten minutes, the second fifteen. The planning committee had roughed out these skits in one session, literally feeling their way and acting as the general situation indicated. With no more preparation than that, they gave the whole conference not only fun but a startling vitality and eagerness, which, we feel, could not have been duplicated in any other way. Though this was not a large conference, this type of springboard can be used for any size group—with microphones if the room is very large.

At a different conference, one of about forty-five people, the members of the three leadership teams started a "good" demonstration discussion of one of the meeting's important problems. Very soon the audience began to participate to an extent that allowed the leader to say, "There are some people near me who say this group is too big. Shall we break it up now into smaller groups?" This they did, and went on from there.

Buzz sessions, or Phillips 66 (see Chapter XIII), can also

be used to start discussion and thinking. They may or may not be combined with panel discussion or a single speaker, as the case requires.

The opening session is the time to make clear, once again, what this type of conference is to be like, and to inject into it some part of the dynamic spirit which, it is hoped, will carry through into the small groups. (It is not the time for reports and business, consideration of by-laws, etc. Granted that these are an evil not to be avoided at every conference, set up a separate session for them. Do not bog down the conference at the start or the final general session which needs to pool decisions and evaluate the past performance.)

Small Group Meetings

We assume that these will make up the working part of the conference and will follow the general pattern outlined earlier in this book. If the groups are to meet only once or twice, one variation would be useful: have the observer make a brief evaluation as early in the first meeting of each group as poor member (or leader) behavior warrants. This is a quick way to salvage time which might otherwise be wasted by the members in their attempt to come to grips with the problem and the method of discussion.

Use One Meal

Even the most zealous conferees need to relax after the small group sessions. But a report of what is going on at the various groups can be given at one meal a day—if it is done well and lasts not more than fifteen or twenty minutes. Often enough, delegates have difficulty making a choice of discussion group; at least one other seems to be almost as appealing, and since they can be in only one group at a time,

Final get-together

they are curious about what is going on elsewhere. The fifteen-minute report is a quick technique for satisfying that curiosity.

In the interval between the small group sessions and the meal, leave time enough for the leadership teams to pick out the highlights of that session and turn them over to someone who can digest them enough to make a report. The report can be followed by buzz sessions, if the delegates wish.

At the PTA Institute, this report was made with astonishing success. As we ate we were suddenly interrupted by what seemed to be, for all purposes, a radio announcer: "This is Station WPTA, your wandering reporter," and so on.

Final Get-Together

Whether this takes place at the end of a one-day conference, or at the end of a longer one, considerable time must be allowed for the last general session. It must also move with

the greatest speed possible, for the delegates are tired. It must include the final pooling of reports, any joint decisions needing to be made, filling out the post-conference reaction slips (see sample, Appendix I) any plans for future meetings and plans for getting the recommendations put into action, etc. Try not to schedule small group sessions the same evening, if they can be avoided.

Buzz sessions may be necessary if there is disagreement on the decisions reached in separate groups. And if no agreement can be reached in the time at hand, disagreements must be included as statements of minority opinion in the final post-conference report. Whether the conferees want a copy of that report must also be decided.

In any case, careful planning must be done ahead of time for this final session so that not too much ground has to be covered by delegates who have part of their minds on catching trains and have already, it is hoped, worked to capacity.

XV

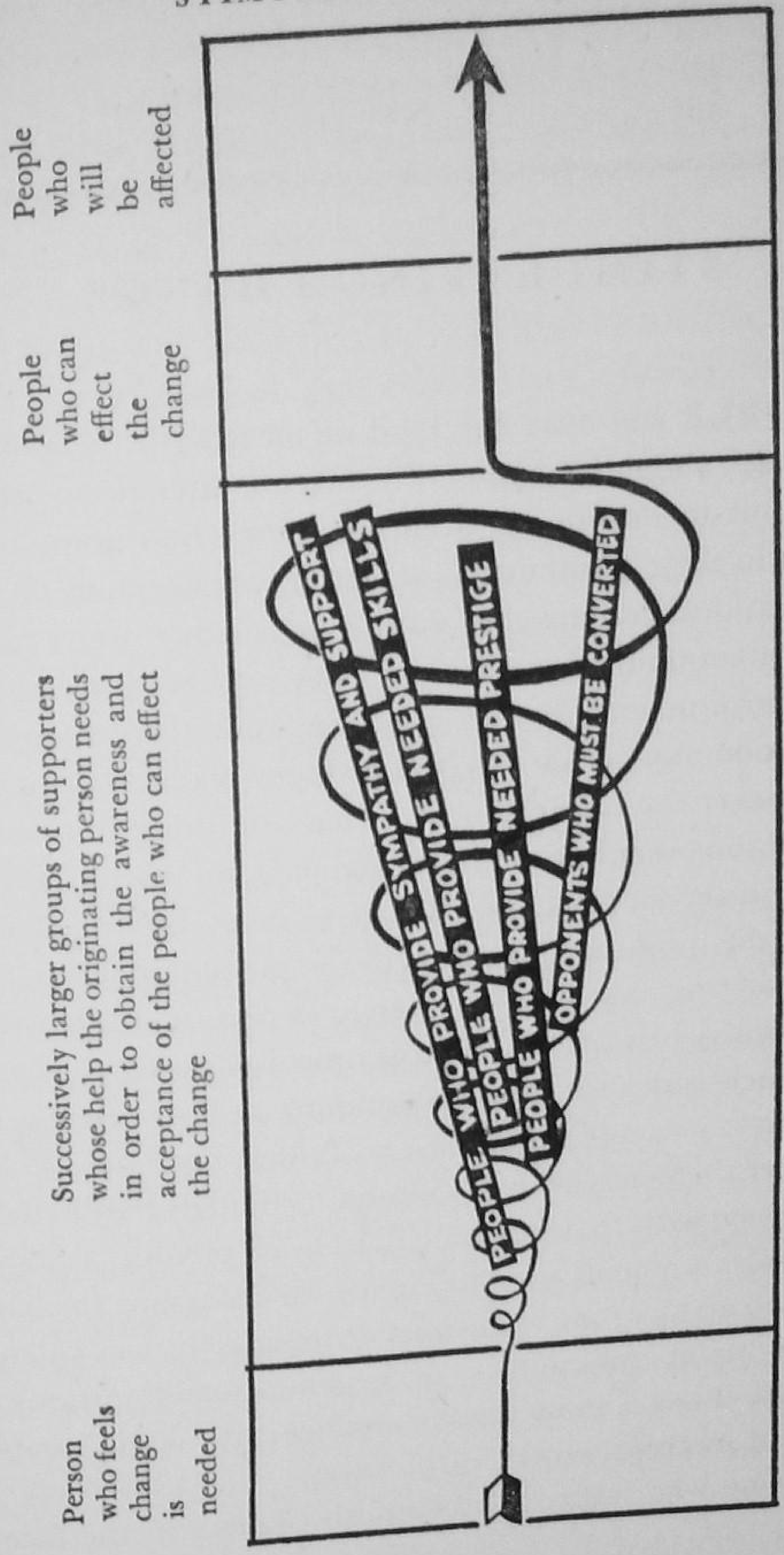
STIMULATING CHANGE

PEOPLE who lead the kind of meetings this book discusses, and most of those who attend, often do so because they want to improve a situation. They may want better schools in their community, or better management in their organizations. Perhaps they want to persuade the city fathers to put street lights in their area. They may be working for a world government, or they may just want their committee to function more efficiently and produce better results.

Whatever the improvement, it has one thing in common with all the other desired improvements, no matter how big or how little they may be. If it is to be successful, it must change the thinking and habits of the people involved.

Stimulating that kind of change is one of the most difficult jobs yet discovered. Most people don't want to change. It is much easier for them to go along as they are. Even if they think a change would be a good idea, their habits often won't let them accept it. It's almost as though they acted in accordance with that fundamental law of physics: a body at rest tends to remain at rest. Their own resistance to change is backed up by strong forces outside themselves, too. Changes usually upset community or organization traditions or customs. They almost always conflict with some people's financial interests, power, or prestige.

Anyone who wants to accomplish changes in the face of



Person who feels change is needed
Successively larger groups of supporters whose help the originating person needs in order to obtain the awareness and acceptance of the people who can effect the change
People who can effect the change
People who will be affected
PEOPLE WHO PROVIDE SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT
PEOPLE WHO PROVIDE NEEDED SKILLS
PEOPLE WHO PROVIDE NEEDED PRESTIGE
OPPONENTS WHO MUST BE CONVERTED

such powerful forces must do a lot of thinking and planning. He probably needs help, sometimes a great deal of it. He and his helpers should know what resistance to expect and how to make people aware that changes are needed. Frequently they must be able, without losing sight of their main purpose, to modify their timing or some details of their goal so others will be able to accept them. When they have acquired a gun and ammunition they also have to know how to load, aim, and fire. And they need enough reserve ammunition to win the battle.

The process of creating change is a kind of spiral. It usually starts with one person who is able to help a few others understand, accept, and develop the needed ideas. Then that small group goes through the same process with a larger group, and so on until all those who need it are reached. Perhaps the design on p. 147 will help show the nature of the process.

The spiral may have few loops in it, or many. A very simple example is in Chapter VI, where we discussed a leader who wants to help his group understand group development and use those principles in its own functioning. We suggested that he first discuss it with two or three of the group's influential members. That was the first loop of the spiral. The second and last was creating a leadership team. The team carried the change directly to the people who could effect it—in that simple case, the same persons who would be affected by it. At the other extreme are the men and women who are trying to change the world situation. Think how many thousands of loops their spiral must complete before it reaches the people who can put that change into effect!

All the way there must be an adjustment to the needs of those affected and a flexibility, a growth, that will absorb strength from the new people who join in support.

Here is a check list of questions intended to help hardy spirits examine their problems and plan their activities. It is divided roughly into four phases: appraising the situation; planning the change; putting the plan into action; cashing in—or checking out. The questions in italics are not general queries that summarize those that follow, but are questions that lead into a new phase or aspect of thinking.

CHECK LIST

FOR ANALYZING A SITUATION IN ORDER TO CHANGE IT

Appraising the Situation

QUESTIONS THE ORIGINATOR SHOULD ANSWER

Exactly what do I want to accomplish?
For whose benefit do I want to accomplish it?
What are the advantages of that goal to me?
Any disadvantages?
How can I get all the facts about the situation?
How can I find causes, not stop at assumptions or rate things "good" or "bad"?
What forces favor the change? What forces oppose it?
What techniques of analysis can I use?
Do I need help from people who are specialists in using analysis techniques?
Who are the people to be affected by the changes I think are needed?
Are they aware of a need to make changes? To what extent?
Would they gain or lose anything from the changes? What?

What are the forces acting on them? Why do they behave as they do?

How will my goal and my attempts to reach it look to them?

Who are the people who can effect the changes?

What interests do they represent?

Are they aware of a need to make changes? To what extent?

Would they gain anything from the changes? What?

Would they lose anything from the changes? What?

What are the forces acting on them? Why do they behave as they do?

How will my goal and my attempts to reach it look to them?

Am I the logical person to carry the main burden?

In the early stages? In later stages?

Am I, or can I be, in an effective position?

Do I have, or can I get, the necessary knowledge and skill?

Who are the best people to give me the help I need?

What interests should be represented?

What special skills are needed? Which ones do I need at the beginning?

What support of position and prestige should I have?

To what extent are the people whose help I want interested in achieving this goal?

How would the change hurt or help each of them?

Can I count on them to help me develop a plan?

If not, how can I increase their interest and feeling of responsibility so they will want to help plan?

How can I help those who are resistant blow off steam if they need to?

Should I demonstrate the present situation to shock those who are apathetic?

Should I demonstrate the situation to be achieved, as an incentive to those who are passively interested?

How can I help each of my helpers answer for himself the first ten of these questions?

How can we as a group best answer the other questions I have answered?

Further Questions the Originating Group Should Answer

What kind of people are the individuals who can effect the changes needed?
What are their prejudices and traditions? Their interests? Their habits and values?
What effects will pressure for the change probably have on their beliefs and behavior?
How can we cope with their reactions in ways which will reduce their resistance?
How can we make them aware of the need for changes?
How can we help them understand how the changes will benefit them?
How can we introduce the new ideas so they will want to try them?
Are some of them favorably enough disposed to help do the planning?
How can we encourage and support them as they try the change?

Planning the Change

What plan of action can we use that will contribute to our goal by its nature as well as by what it can accomplish?
What are the steps we must go through?
What is a realistic time schedule?
What are the details of the first step?
How, when, and where do we start?
How do we organize to carry out the plan successfully?
Do we need a staff and facilities?
How can we provide them?
Have we provided for good communication among ourselves?
At what points should we appraise our progress and, if necessary, revise our plans?
How do we go about making appraisals of progress?
Are there any key actions that will indicate success or failure?

To what extent will they give us adequate information?

What else do we need to cover?

What techniques can we use?

Can we determine them ourselves or do we need a specialist to help us?

To what extent may it be helpful and feasible to include in this activity people who can effect the changes needed?

How can the group explore the probable consequences of its key decisions and planned actions?

Do we need practice in carrying out any parts of the plan?

What do we need to know about the way groups function?

About helping groups function most effectively?

Do we need to know how groups reach decisions?

Putting the Plan into Action

Once we have started on our plan, are we keeping on our course, not going down some byway or concentrating on some minor aspect?

Are we taking advantage of the knowledge our analyses gave us?

Are we keeping our communication good?

Are we pushing our activity at the right speed? Do we know when to initiate the big push? Are we ready to supervise it properly?

Do we know when and how to conclude it successfully?

How can we diagnose causes if our group action becomes inefficient?

Is the goal we determined still what we want to achieve?

Did we have all the facts? Were they correct? Did we accept as facts assumptions which were incorrect?

Was our estimate of the situation correct?

Were there weak spots in our plan? What were they?

Did we fall down in our execution of the plan? When? How? Why?

Did we fail in meeting unexpected situations? When? How? Why?

Can we answer these questions ourselves or do we need help from others? What others? People affected by our plan? Technical experts?

How can we determine, and take, effective action to correct weaknesses in our performance and improve our progress?

Are there some aspects of our goal we must modify or sacrifice in order to achieve the rest?

What effects do additional or better understood facts have on our plans?

What is our present estimate of the situation?

What can we do to prevent recurrence of our errors in carrying out the plans?

How can we improve our ability to meet unexpected situations?

What lessons have we learned which will assure us that our evaluations are complete and sound?

Cashing in—or Checking out

When we have completed our plan, have we accomplished our goal?

Were we wrong in believing we could reach our goal? Why?

Have changes in the situation made it too difficult for us to reach? Why?

What forces are now for us? Against us? What can we salvage?

Can we still achieve part of the goal?

Should we wait for a better time? When is it likely to be? What should we do in the interval to strengthen ourselves?

Do we want to maintain our gains or spread them? To what extent? In either case, who are the people we still need to convince?

What are their reactions to what we have accomplished?

How can we make them aware of the need and develop their acceptance of our accomplishments so far?

How can we get their interest and participation?

Who are the people outside our immediate area of interest who are affected by our activities?

How can we learn their reactions to our accomplishments?
What effect are they likely to have on our activities?
Are there people or organizations who are a threat to our accomplishments? What do we need to do about them?

How shall we select future or supplementary leaders?
What qualifications should people have to be capable of replacing us as leaders or augmenting us? What available people have them?
What do we need to do to stimulate their interest so they will be willing to assume responsibility?
What other people are willing to become leaders? Which of them can be given sufficient capability by training and further experience? What do we need to do to make them qualified?

How do we know when to stop, merge, or delegate?
Do we have any reason to continue to exist as a group?
Is our goal secure enough so there is need only to protect it from, or adjust it to, newly arising forces?
Can some other group do that as well as we?
Is there any other reason to affiliate with another group?
Do we want to retain any nucleus or records?

APPENDIX I

AIDS

Sample Structure and Content for a Recorder's Record

Subject	*Content*
What is Vic's problem?	Vic explains he has three sections under him; two of them depend on each other, but don't work with 3rd group. Chief of 3rd group the sticker—keeps all three working separately. What can Vic do?
Facts and Obstacles	Each section head loyal, competent. But each section like separate kingdom, loyal to its head. Needs to switch functions, but that one woman resists any change in her job. She's good at her job if she'd only cooperate better. She's the one who's holding everything up. Thinks she'd lose prestige. She's been told to switch functions and that it would be better for everybody. Obeys on surface, but hangs on to all details; won't let them go. Has Vic tried talking with her about it? All she does is get angry; keeps saying there must be some other reason behind wanting her to change. Stubborn; won't be reasonable. Group asks questions about other section heads; why don't they get on with her? What kind of person is she? How did Vic tell her to make changes? How did she act?

Subject	*Content*
Analysis	What is she really trying to preserve? Is she afraid of something? If so, what? Are there people on those detailed jobs she depends on too much to let go? Would it mean salary cut? Does she think it would? Vic doesn't know.
Decision	Role-play situation next meeting, with Vic playing unreasonable section head. See if that gives clue to her actions and how Vic should handle situation.

Sample Structure and Content for an Observer's Record

Subject	*Action*	*Notes*
Vic's Problem	Vic outlines situation as he sees it—what he wants to achieve and why.	Vic talking—group interested.
Facts and Obstacles	Vic still talking, describing all angles. Group begins asking questions.	Group still interested but growing restive. Several want to ask questions—hold back—finally break in.
	Gene asks what other section chiefs are like. Mac trying to find out what everybody does. Asks for organization chart. Gene back to section chiefs. Mac comes back to jobs. Norm asks has Vic talked to her about it? Vic explodes—*Has he!*	Wandering all over the lot. Mac and Gene monopolizing questions. Why won't Mac stick to subject? Edna wants to get in her questions. Nobody giving her a chance. Somebody should stop this. Why doesn't the blackboard member bust it?
	Edna finally breaks in; wants more dope on section chief as human being: what's she like? What's making her act this way? Mac and Gene arguing on side. Norm mediates. Jim asks Vic about Edna's questions.	Nice work Norm and Jim.
	Vic repeats what he said before. Jim comes in	Group bored. Sitting it out now—3 min.–4.

Subject	*Action*	*Notes*
	with: Tell us more about how you handled it. Vic talks.	
Analysis	Norm again, bringing them back to Edna's questions.	Norm helping Edna, trying to lead into analysis.
	Getting below surface. Norm, Gene, Edna hypothesizing on reasons for section chief holding out. Interesting but not getting anywhere so far.	Group is interested again; listening.
Solution	Jim suggests role-play at next meeting. Pause. Gene, okay. Edna, okay. Norm, okay. How about it, Vic? Sure. Planning details.	

(In starting the evaluation at the end of the meeting, the observer passed over all the notes given here except those showing poor member responsibility, and started group talking about that: how and why it had happened.)

Sample Post-Meeting Reaction Sheets and Summaries

Very simple post-meeting reaction sheets and summaries can show a group what difficulties are keeping down its production and how to help the members correct them.

Here is a form for a simple analysis sheet:

Sample of Simple Reaction Sheet

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

If you will answer the following questions, it will help us a great deal in improving our future meetings.

1. What did you think were the weaknesses in today's meeting?

2. What did you think were the strong points?

3. What improvements would you suggest in the operation of the next meeting?

Please date sheet but *do not sign* your name.

Following is a compilation of remarks made about a meeting on a simple post-meeting reaction sheet:

Sample Summary of Post-Meeting Reactions

	Times Mentioned
1. *What were the weak points in this meeting?*	
Too much dependence on leader	2
Discussion not as lively as last week	2
Too much expression of opinion instead of trying to integrate ideas	1
Some members still too shy to participate	3

	Times Mentioned
One or two members have tendency to dominate	4
Not enough progress on problem	1
Some wandering from subject	2
2. *What were the strong points?*	
Excellent interest	5
Good group interaction, members supporting each other	3
Good progress on problem	6
Ease of participation, relaxed atmosphere	4
Good leadership	1
Good job by blackboard member	1
3. *Suggested improvements*	
More balanced participation, group draw in quiet members	4
Better ventilation	1
Dominating members give others more chance	3
Stay on subject	2

If members are willing to put in the compiling time necessary, they can work out more complicated devices and focus on almost any aspect of the meeting they wish. The next pair of samples are from a group which became very much interested in the process of what goes on in a group, and much concerned about weak participation.

Post-Meeting Reaction Sheet

_______________195–

What did you think of this meeting? Please be frank. Your comments can contribute a great deal to our future meetings. You will receive a copy of the summary of all the comments.

1. What did you like about today's meeting?

2. What did you dislike?

3. What improvements would you suggest in the operation of the next meeting?

4. Of the times you wanted to talk but did not, how many were because—
   a. You couldn't break in when you wanted? About ____ times
   b. On the whole it didn't seem worth while? About ____ times
   c. The group might not accept the contribution well? About ____ times
   d. It would not have helped the group at that moment? About ____ times
   e. You couldn't phrase it well enough? About ____ times
   f. Someone else said it? About ____ times
   g. Reasons other than those listed here (please specify):
      ________________ About ____ times
      ________________ About ____ times

5. On the whole, how do you rate this meeting? (Check one.)

____	____	____	____	____
No good	Mediocre	All right	Good	Excellent

You do not need to sign your name

In the sample summary (p. 162) from the complex p.m.r. sheet just shown, the comments are grouped by different aspects of the meeting (listed as A, B, C, etc.). The likes and dislikes in each aspect are placed opposite each other so members can compare them easily. Each comment is listed separately. The suggested improvements and participation data follow the Likes and Dislikes.

Summary of Members' Post-Meeting Reactions

LIKES	DISLIKES
A. *Purpose and Progress*	
1. Agreement on problem of mutual interest helped unify group	1. Didn't get enough specific points listed
2. Matter to be discussed was decided quickly	2. Wasn't interested in topic particularly
3. Didn't take us long to choose a goal	
4. A lot was accomplished	
5. Moved toward goal	
6. Progress was made on point at issue	
B. *Atmosphere and Attention*	
1. Those that did participate seemed interested	
2. Pace free	
3. Good humor of group	
4. Relaxed atmosphere by most members	
5. There seems to be a good spirit and ease in the group	
6. Silences when they occur are no longer uncomfortable	
C. *Quality of Discussion*	
1. Good discussion by those who participated	1. It seemed to be more difficult for most of the members to make suggestions on the points in question
2. Thinking was stimulated to a very high degree	2. Used many concepts and
3. I checked the meeting as	

LIKES	DISLIKES
"good" because I think it will be valuable to review the record	words without defining as well as needed for discussion.
4. Discussion flowed freely	3. Lack of clear thinking and expression
5. Discussion moved along, almost logically	4. Not enough disagreement

D. *Pertinence of Discussion*

LIKES	DISLIKES
1. Little straying from point under discussion	1. Occasional attempts to argue about irrelevant points or terms in light of over-all objective
2. We kept fairly well focused on the topic	
3. Attention constantly focused on main topic under discussion	
4. Not too much diversion in discussion, very little, in fact	

E. *Group Development*

LIKES	DISLIKES
1. People still forgetting their responsibilities as group members; I often did	1. The group did not seem to be "together"—perhaps it was because of the nature of the topic discussed
2. Bill realizing his responsibility as a group member, came to leader's assistance a few times	
3. There seemed to be a sincere effort to clarify our thinking—little evidence of blocking or distracting	
4. Group refused to be diverted into tangents	

LIKES	DISLIKES
E. *Group Development (cont.)*	
5. Much interplay between members of the group	
F. *Leadership*	
1. Leader conscious of his responsibility as leader	1. Leader sometimes went too far in ascribing group's ideas to group
2. Continuity supported by leader	2. Leader could have summarized better at times
3. Genial attitude of leader	
4. Ken did well as leader	
5. Leader keeping us on focus	
6. Leader asking the recorder for a summary	
G. *Participation*	
1. Interest was good even though all did not participate verbally	1. Some members did not participate
2. Most people participated	2. Almost no participation by some members
	3. Some people who ordinarily participate did so hardly at all this evening

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

A. *Pertinence of Discussion*

1. That discussion be more focused

B. *Group Development*

1. Members be aware of their responsibility to keep discussion focused

C. *Participation*

1. Group should attempt to draw in non-verbal members.

2. Attempt should be made to draw in non-participants.
3. Silent members should take responsibility of expressing themselves if topic is vital to them; if not, of asking for change of topic.

FREQUENCY AND CAUSES OF WITHHELD COMMENTS

Reason	Times Mentioned
a. Couldn't break in	12
b. Didn't seem worth while	8
c. Might not be accepted well	7
d. Would not have helped	5
e. Couldn't phrase it properly	2
f. Someone else said it	2
Lack of confidence	1
Waited for someone else	4
Couldn't understand	6

MEMBERS' RATINGS OF MEETING

Excellent	3
Good	7
All Right	2
Mediocre	—
No Good	—

Sample Conference Post-Meeting Reaction Sheet

HOW DID YOU LIKE THIS CONFERENCE?

Discussion Group Leader ______________________ Date ____

Please give us your frank answers to the following questions. They will be very helpful in making our next conference more productive and useful.

1. Was it helpful to stop occasionally and look at how we were working together? __ __
   yes no
2. Do you feel the conference accomplished things which will be helpful to you in your own group?

______________	______________	______________
Not very helpful	Some help	Very helpful

3. Please list here problems on which you expected help but did not get it:

4. Should we have another conference like this one next year? __ __
   yes no

   If not, what kind would you prefer?

Comments: (please continue on the other side if you like)

Please do *not* sign your name

APPENDIX II

TRAINING PLAN FOR CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP TEAMS

The training schedule which follows fills a hard-working day, and each practice or explanatory session must begin and end promptly. The plan is a sample only, intended to be used as a guide, and adjusted to fit the size and needs of a particular conference. If yours is smaller than the one we have projected, fewer leadership teams and a less complex arrangement would do; if larger, more teams and a larger training staff are needed.

Whatever plan you use, give the delegates who will serve on the leadership teams some advance knowledge of what they will be doing. As soon as they have been picked, they should have information about their jobs: material prepared by the steering committee, or suggested reading.

The object throughout this day of training is to give practice in techniques. Subject matter for the practice meetings is important both for its content and to provide a vehicle for the leadership teams to learn their jobs and to learn to work together. As we mentioned before, you will need one large room and as many small rooms as there are leadership teams.

This sample plan is based on a conference of about two hundred delegates, for whom twelve leadership teams should be enough (in each group at the conference proper there will then be about twelve members besides the leadership team of four). Hence forty-eight of your delegates will arrive a day early for this training. They will be helped in all details of the practice sessions by an over-all training staff: a director (who is the leader of the training staff), a trainer for blackboard members, a trainer for recorders, and a trainer for observers—four in all. Although each of these has his special field in which to work in the early after-

noon sessions, he is competent to help and direct any one of the leadership jobs, and does.

Here is the sample plan:

9:30–10:00 a.m. REGISTRATION AND ASSIGNMENT

1. Registration of forty-eight delegates.
2. Assignment of forty-eight delegates to twelve teams of four members each. For convenience, we label the teams, A-1, A-2, A-3; B-1, B-2, B-3; C-1, C-2, C-3; D-1, D-2, D-3.
3. Assignment of teams to small rooms; each delegate given a schedule for the day, showing where he will be for each session, and the seating arrangements for the general meetings. For the opening session all delegates are assigned to the large meeting room with the leaders of the twelve teams on the platform.

10:00–10:30 INTRODUCTION AND DEMONSTRATION

1. Director (leader of training staff) introduces himself and other three trainers. Each explains his function, i.e., the function of a leader, a blackboard member, a recorder, and an observer. Or the four may hold a joint discussion of their jobs. The reason for each job, how it promotes better production for any group, must be explained so that leadership teams understand the purpose of what they will be doing in the conference. Limit this to ten minutes.
2. Director (in his role of leader) holds a demonstration meeting with the leaders of the twelve teams already assembled on platform, seated in a semicircle, acting as group members. Other three trainers act as blackboard member, recorder, and observer.

   Subject: What's Wrong with Most Meetings?

   Limit to ten minutes. Though this sounds difficult, it has been done frequently. Given an opportunity, people quickly bring to light their pet gripes about meetings that have bored or frustrated them.

   Trainer-observer gives one-minute report, leads group in evaluation. This should bring out examples of principles outlined by training staff in their introduction to the demonstration. Takes the final ten minutes of this half-hour.

10:30–11:00 PREPARATION FOR PRACTICE SESSIONS

Director assigns to each team subject matter for practice meetings, each subject being how to prevent one of the faults listed in the demonstration meeting.

All A teams go to one small room with a member of the training staff. All B's to another, etc. Similar practice meetings will be going on in each room. (For simplicity we discuss only what occurs in one room.)

Member of training staff with A teams and team members introduce themselves to each other. A-1 team gets together and makes plans for its practice meeting; A-2 and A-3 do the same in other parts of the room. Member of the training staff available for consultation.

11:00–12:00 PRACTICE SESSIONS

Each team takes its turn at leading a practice meeting, ten minutes in length, with members of other teams serving as group members, discussing assigned subject. The recorder makes his record; the blackboard member does his chalking; the observer makes his notes.

At the end of each practice meeting, the team observer reports for one minute and the group evaluates for about eight minutes, leaving a brief time for the group to adjust to a new subject and a new leadership team.

Member of the training staff gives suggestions as needed.

12:00–1:00 LUNCH

1:00–1:30 DISCUSSION OF SEPARATE FUNCTIONS

All leaders go to one room, recorders to a second, blackboard members to a third, and observers to a fourth. The appropriate member of the training staff goes with each group. Each trainer leads his group in a discussion of its functions, and the members compile a list of guides for their activity in the conference (which the staff reproduces and distributes later).

1:40–3:30 SECOND SET OF PRACTICE MEETINGS

The teams are shuffled for the afternoon's practice meetings so that each team leads a group different from the one it worked with in the morning:

Room W	*Room X*	*Room Y*	*Room Z*
Teams A-1	Teams B-1	Teams C-1	Teams D-1
B-2	A-2	D-2	C-2
C-3	D-3	A-3	B-3

After twenty minutes in which each team meets separately to plan for the meeting it will conduct, the teams rotate the leading of practice meetings, as they did in the morning session. This time, however, each meeting lasts for twenty minutes before the one-minute report from the team observer and seven- or eight-minute evaluation by the group. As in the morning, the staff member participates to clear up misunderstandings.

Subject matter: Two of the teams in each room lead discussions on problems which groups will work on at the conference proper.

The third team's subject is: What is the best way to introduce this type of conference to the delegates at the opening session? (A prearranged skit showing "Two Kinds of Meetings," or "One Good Meeting," or a four-way discussion by the training staff, are among the possibilities.)

Discussing specific problems the small groups will work on the next day has the advantage of giving the teams' members a more lifelike dress rehearsal for their jobs. Being able to help determine how to open the conference makes it more "their conference," increases their feeling of participation.

3:30–3:45 BREAK

3:45–____ SUMMING UP

After the afternoon break the team members come back to meet together in the large meeting room. Four teams, one chosen by lot (or volunteering) from each group, are on the platform to discuss the recommendations of the meetings which considered the opening of the conference, and to decide how it is to be done. The leadership team for the session has also been chosen by lot from among the four. Since this is the last scheduled meeting of the day, it can be as long

as the problem requires, or as short as the team members' remaining energy permits.

If the decision is to open the conference with some type of role-playing, the members who volunteer to do it will need some time afterward, or in the evening, to make their plans and, if they wish, try a quick practice session.

Later Meetings of Leadership Team Members

Meetings of leadership team members during the course of the conference can be very helpful. Problems come up during the meetings which could not be anticipated (or indeed recognized) by the team members until they are experienced in the reality of the actual discussions. These extra meetings make it possible for the leaders to share the problems they have encountered, and what solutions any of them have found. The observers can share theirs similarly. Meetings of recorders and of blackboard members can serve the same purposes.

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GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
16 APR 1955
T. KALLUPATTI

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used to come away from meetings confirmed in their separate verdicts: his that there should be some way people meeting together could accomplish more; hers that so much time was wasted she would never go to another. (See Superior Being, page 14.)

Mr. Strauss's conviction found support when he spent a vacation in 1947 at the National Training Laboratory in Group Development at Bethel, Maine. Since then his enthusiasm for the new methods he discovered there (the subject of continuing research among social scientists) has drawn him into leading discussion groups and teaching evening courses on how meetings can use the abilities of all members. (By day he is a management engineer currently with the Army in Washington.) Mrs. Strauss survived her husband's enthusiasm for three years before she persuaded him that they ought, together, to translate his own experience and the findings of the social scientists into a practical book that any chairman, any member, any office supervisor or executive would find useful. *New Ways to Better Meetings* is the result.

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